

*The Misadventures
of Martin Guerre
By Gaston Delayer*

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY



A15044918870

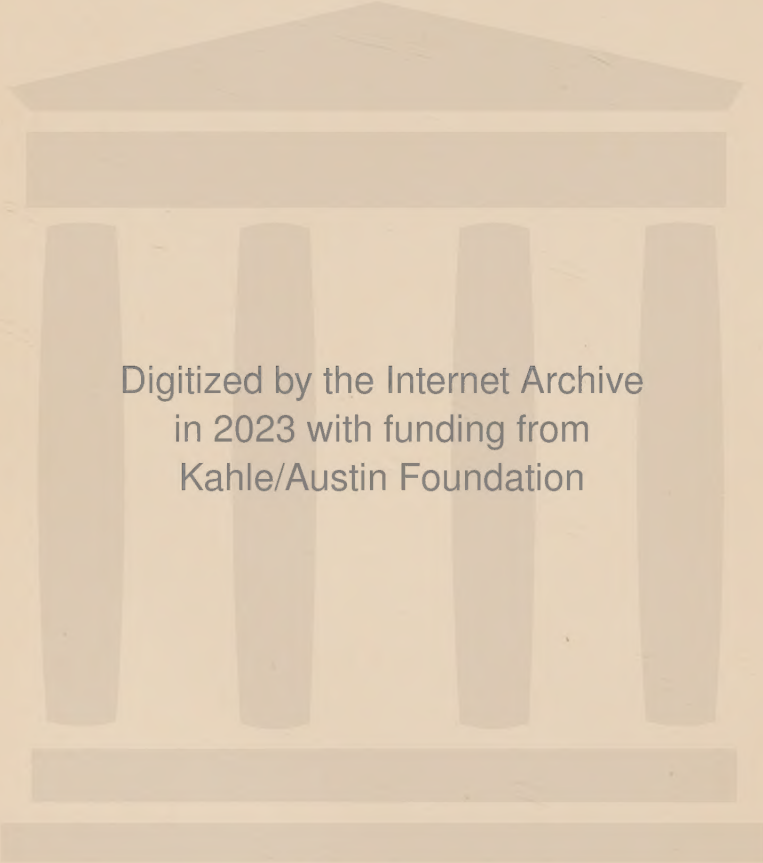
*A15044 918870

FIRST US EDITION

OP 92

30-

ES



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/misadventuresofm0000gast>

*The Misadventures
of
Martin Guerre*



A Dramatic Idyll

*The Misadventures of
Martin Guerre*

Translated from the French of GASTON DELAYEN

by

Farrell Symons

New York
E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.



PQ

2607

E249

M413x

West

THE MISADVENTURES OF MARTIN GUERRE :: COPY-
RIGHT, 1929, BY E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC. :: ALL
RIGHTS RESERVED :: :: PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

Contents

TO THE READER

*Concerning some sage reflections of a Counsellor of the
Parliament of Tholozé*

Page ix



FIRST PART

The Idyll

I. A PRETTY LITTLE WEDDING

In which two children are united and what became of it

Page 13

II. DAPHNIS AND CHLOE

In which we see that wit comes slow to young men

Page 21

III. JARNAC'S BLOW

*In which we see that a man sometimes falls into
his own trap*

Page 35

IV. MARTIN GOES TO WAR

In which no one knows when he'll come back

Page 56

V. MISTRESS PENELOPE

*In which we see only wisdom and virtue, and that they are
difficult to keep*

Page 69

VI. THE WARRIOR RETURNS

In which Penelope wonders if he really is Ulysses

Page 85



SECOND PART

The Drama

VII. UNCLE PIERRE

In which we see that nothing here below is lasting

Page 97

VIII. THE MAN WITH THE
WOODEN LEG

*In which we see that a wooden leg is not enough for a wife to
recognize her husband by*

Page 117

IX. MONSIEUR DE CORAS

*In which we see that Judge Bridoye, who so much astonished
Pantagruel, seems to have had a disciple*

Page 138

X. THE HUSBAND IS PITILESS

*In which we see that Ulysses would have done better to
stay on the island of Calypso*

Page 146

XI. AND SO ENDS THE
ADVENTURE

*In which we see that the best way to keep a secret is to tell
it to no one*

Page 153



TO THE READER

Concerning Some Sage Reflections of a Counsellor of the Parliament of Tholoze

IN the opinion of the counsellor Jean de Coras, who contributed one hundred and eleven lofty and erudite annotations—at least, such they were, according to him—to the text of the decision which it was his duty to lay before the Parliament of Tholoze (as the city of Toulouse was called in those days), this curious conjugal adventure is a stupendous story, prodigiously strange owing to the unprecedented marvellousness of its subject; a case doubly memorable since the like is rarely known to man. It is a genuine tragi-comedy, "for the protasis, or opening of the same, is very merry, pleasant and amusing; the epitasis, or succeeding part, uncertain and doubtful, owing to the disputes and differences which arose during the suit; the catastrophe and issue of the moral tale, sorry, pitiful and wretched for hypocrisy and pretense detected, and also for the exemplary punishment which

followed. The whole presents a singular example of the just vengeance of Heaven upon the unrighteous, who in the end are never left unpunished for their faults and transgressions."

In short, here is a very true narrative, to which the advice of Rabelais in regard to his "Inestimable Life of the great Gargantua, father of Pantagruel, written by the Quintessence abstractor," applies wonderfully well:

*Amy Lecteurs, qui ce Livre lisez,
Despouillez-vous de toute affection;
Et le lisant ne vous scandalisez.
Il ne contient mal, ny infection.
Vray est, qu'icy peu de perfection
Vous apprendrez, sinon en cas de rire:
. . . Mieulx est de ris, que de larmes escripre:
Pource que rire est le propre de l'homme.**

* Good friends, my readers, who peruse this book
Be not offended, whilst on it you look;
Denude yourselves of all depriv'd affection,
For it contains no badness nor infection;
'Tis true that it brings forth to you no birth
Of any value but in point of mirth;
. . . One inch of joy surmounts of grief a span
Because to laugh is proper to the man.
Urquhart's translation.

FIRST PART

The Idyll



I

A PRETTY LITTLE WEDDING

*In Which Two Children Are United
and What Became of It*

NOW, on a cold and sunny morning in January, of the year 1538—old style *—the single bell of the little church of Artigues pealed out merrily, and from the building burst a happy and tumultuous procession.

It was the wedding day of Martin Guerre and Bertrande de Rols.

Preceded by two pipers and a fiddler, the wedding party took the high-banked path that wound up behind the church, through the broom, to the plateau, on the slope of which, at the foot of a grim tower that did duty as watch post, appeared the roofs of a farm.

The little married couple—he was eleven, and she not yet ten—walked prettily arm in arm, the boy from time to time ceremoniously

* According to the Julian calendar, and 1539 according to the Gregorian calendar, which made the year begin on the first of January instead of Easter Eve. It was Charles IX who, in 1564, in spite of the opposition of Parliament, carried back the commencement of the year to January 1.

kissing the girl's hand after the manner of the country. They wore that serious air which children put on when they are in the public eye and play a part. Moreover, the girl was embarrassed by the little pearl-studded collar around her neck and the long white robe which she was wearing for the first time, and walked with an awkward slouch that did ill-justice to her child-like prettiness, with which, indeed, she had been liberally endowed. Albeit, she seemed very proud of the splendour of her garb, and not least of the bracelets that she wore on her arms. Meanwhile, the boy, tightly enclosed in a velvet jacket, and ill at ease in long pearl-grey breeches that came down to his heels, moved forward with a stiff unnatural gait.

Behind them came a company of pretty girls and boys, daintily and neatly clad in the fashion of the country, followed by a laughing and jesting throng of relations, friends and acquaintances.

As they advanced along the path, the black-birds took wing, cawing impudently, as if in mockery of the miniature wedding.

At the farm everybody paused to take breath.

From this point a wide expanse of country was visible, extending in clear weather as far as the junction of the Garonne and the Ariège toward Tholoze.

On the east, in a picturesque spot, stood the town of Foix, dominated by a tall rock, on which a castle, flanked by three Gothic towers, proudly reared its walls; and beyond, the Pyrenees rose tier upon tier, culminating in snow-covered peaks.

The farm was the ancestral home of the Rols family. There for many a year they had lived from father to son.

The master and mistress of the house belonged to the petty nobility. Born in Artigues—now called Artigat—a little borough of the diocese of the ancient city of Rieux, in the county of Foix, they had never left the district.

Martin Guerre came from the country of the Basconts or Bascongados,* having been born at Hendaye, in Biscay, in independent territory—for Charles V had just confirmed the special privileges vouchsafed to that Basque province of Spain.

His parents, we are told, were of a higher

* Spanish names
for the
Biscayans.

station than the peasants: indeed, his father was looked upon practically as a gentleman. Martin had scarcely been born, and was still being suckled, when the elder Guerre left Biscay—why, none ever knew—and sought a dwelling in the county of Foix, in the neighbourhood of Artigues, where he bought a farm.

Martin and Bertrande had grown up side by side, sharing their games and amusements. Many a time had they romped together in the fields, trapping birds, tracking the animals of the woods, going for long walks, and getting up to all sorts of pranks. Early their parents had decided that Bertrande should be given to Martin for wife.

An atmosphere of comfort pervaded the entire house.

In the main hall, where the bride's parents were entertaining the wedding guests, the walls were adorned by the saintly images of Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene, and by cooking utensils of shining copper. On either side of the great fireplace the salt-box and the flour-bin hung from handsome brackets of white wood—carved by a shepherd—and from

the mantel-shelf was suspended a mother-of-pearl shell, that was used to call the cattle home of an evening. In the corner stood a massive German clock, which chimed out the hour, at the same time projecting quaint little carved people. Across the ceiling ran stout wooden beams, from which hung ropeways of onions.

A long table, already heavily laden, ran down the middle of the room: in the centre were two chairs for the married couple, while stools and benches were set for the guests.

Without more ado—for everyone was very hungry—but not omitting a washing of the fingers, with which each helped and fed himself, all sat down to the wedding banquet.

The festivities continued far into the afternoon—too long, indeed, to suit the little married folk, who wanted, as children will, to get up from the table and play awhile.

When at last the meal was finished and they had taken off the tablecloth—pleated and crimped like a lady's collar, and used by the guests to wipe themselves whilst eating—the wine began to flow, and turn by turn they told stories or sang songs.

Darkness fell, and torches and lamps were lit.

Several of the guests had drunk more than was seemly, and whilst some were scarce beyond stammering, others grew rowdy and boisterous. The wedding banquet began to give way to revelry.

Fortunately, the village musicians took their place upon a platform, and to the sound of violin, hautboy, and drum the young couple opened the ball.

They had much success at the *passe-pieds* and with a dance they executed to the accompaniment of cymbals. It was a marvel to see them turn in complicated figures and windings, interlace and mingle, face each other and stop of a sudden; and so well had they learnt their steps that there was never the least confusion.

None, in truth, hung back from the dancing, and each contributed his share to the evening's gaiety. Most relished was the "garter" dance, executed by the girls of the countryside. Taking their garters in their hands, they passed them from one to the other above their heads, then mingled and interweaved them between their legs; next they broke away

and spread out gracefully with little skips, following each other the while without ever losing step with the song or instrument to whose accompaniment they danced. It was, indeed, a charming thing to see, for the skipping, interweaving, disentangling, passing of the garters, and the gracefulness of the girls all diffused a dainty wantonness, which brought pretty legs to view and made it easy to observe whose stockings were the more discreetly attached. But that dance was something to be seen and not described.

The two little married people were soon tired out, for to them the day had been a long and fatiguing one. So whilst the dances and divertissements continued in full swing, the mothers, without interrupting the merry-making, quietly withdrew them and conducted them to the bridal chamber—Bertrande's room.

In the recess, shut off by curtains, a second little bed had been placed, somewhat above Bertrande's own, for so young they were it did not seem fitting to put them to sleep together till they should have taken on more years.

After a fervent prayer by all, rendering

thanks for that memorable day, and the exchange of little kisses, the two children got into their beds, and, behind closed windows and doors, they were left to themselves.

And so ended that long-wished-for day.

It was some time before Bertrande could go to sleep. Vainly she sought a meaning in what the curé, before marrying them, had said anent the duties and submissiveness of the wife in marriage. All she could think was that this great day, about which they had heard so much talk and so much mystery had been made, was really very much like any other holiday.

As sleep did not come to her, she leaned out of her bed toward the other, somewhat above her, where lay her little husband.

"Are you asleep, Martin?" she asked in a discreet voice.

Martin was already in the land of dreams.

II

DAPHNIS AND CHLOE

*In Which We See That Wit Comes Slow
to Young Men*

AND so, guided for the most part by Nature, they grew up together, care-free, candid and ingenuous. Happy were the days of their early youth.

The boy helped with the work in the fields. The girl, young as she was, already gave promise of the good things predicted of her: charm of person and sweetness of character united to make her faultless.

At night, after the family had supped, they would retire to the little beds they had used since the bridal night.

They lived as lovingly, yet as chastely, as two little angels in Paradise. Albeit, their eighteenth year drew on apace.

More than once, indeed, had they overheard mischievous gossip, but they gave it no heed. Happy in their state, they yearned for

nothing more. The boy's whole thoughts were bound up in the girl, who, now grown tall and temptingly pretty, did her best to please him in all things.

Of a truth, each spring found them more tenderly united. The love which had stolen into their hearts made their kisses longer and sweeter.

One day, whilst he was trying to get a bird's nest for his beloved, a branch broke and he fell, hurting himself a little. She had consoled him with tender caresses, and their lips had met in a long, long kiss, which they had found sweet past belief.

What lay beyond, they vaguely glimpsed; but the unknown frightened them a little.

Another day, after having romped in the fields, they went bathing together in the Cèze, and when he saw how beautiful she was in her nakedness an expressible emotion took possession of him. Stretching himself out beside her on the green sward, he covered her charming body with kisses, murmuring to her some verses that he remembered:

*Tu es faiblette et tendre chose;
Tu es plus fraîche que n'est rose;
Tu es plus blanche que crystal*

Que nief qui choit sur la glace en val.

Ah! ton sourire! ah! ton baiser!

*Quel savor a? Celestial.**

But it was always at this point that they ended, and they went home singing all the way an old pastoral:

*Ce fut en Mai,
Au dous tems gai
Que la saisons est bele!
Main me levai,
Joër m'alai
Lez une fontanelle,
En un vergier
Clos d'esglantiers,
Oï une viele,
Là vi dansier
Un chevalier
Et une damoiselle.**

But one day a friend, to whom Martin had confided—between the very young, as between the very old, there are few secrets—that he had never yet dared to make Bertrande wholly his wife, lectured him soundly and added, mockingly:

"You're by no manner of means an Adonis but you're hale and hearty, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied Martin.

* In the representation of *Adam*, a liturgical drama of the 12th century, by an unknown poet: "You are a frail and tender thing; you are fresher than the rose; you are whiter than crystal, than the snow which falls on the ice in the vale. Ah! your laugh, your kiss; they are heavenly!"

* From the old ballad-writer Pierre Moniot: " 'Twas in the gladsome month of May; I got me up early and went abroad. Beside a fountain in a garden enclosed with wild roses I heard a viol, and saw a knight and a lady dance."

"Well, by all the saints, do like your father. You and he are as much alike as two peas in a pod. You're grown up now, and it's time to slough childish ways and act like a man."

Martin thanked him and that very evening had a single bed made up for Bertrande and himself.

But mockery is no remedy.

Days and months passed, and their twentieth year drew nigh. The beauty of Bertrande opened like that of a flower.

Martin's love for her was very strong—indeed, all the treasure of the world for him was in her—and, tempted again and again by her caresses, he yearned to make their union complete. But at night when they lay in bed side by side, whether by a curse of Heaven or the sorcery of the evil spirit, no sooner did he draw nigh to Bertrande and begin to caress and kiss her than he became so moved and broke into such a perspiration that not only his eyes but his whole body poured out tears, and he remained the entire night in a state of lassitude, temptation and continence. When he saw his virility ebb thus mysteriously, a blind rage swept over him,

for he considered his agony not less than that of Purgatory.

Bertrande was dumbfounded, for she had never seen him so reluctant, and notwithstanding that she entwined her polished arms about his neck, pillowing his head on her full, white throat, and talked so prettily to him and looked so sweet that the most saintly anchorite must needs have yielded to her charm, Martin passed the night in such turmoil, pain and regret at finding himself so little capable of the function of a husband as is past telling.

Bertrande's friends, as indiscreet as those of Martin, were not slow with their suspicions, and informed her that marriage was something quite different from what she had known till then, that women were not intended to remain maidens, and that, for the honour of herself and her family, she should make a petition to the congress—in view of her husband's condition—unless, they added maliciously, she wished to "imitate the virgins of Marolles." *

But although Martin was scarce well favoured either as to face or form, Bertrande loved him dearly. True it is that love is blind,

* A saying quite common in the 16th century (Cf. Brantôme: *Illustrious Women*), but of which the origin has never been traced.

and blind in such a way that it is not beauty that we love, but what we love is beautiful. Thus, Bertrande heard these indiscreet counsels with an ill grace; she thought them ridiculous, and believed her friends sought only to set her at variance with Martin and endanger their love for one another. Further, she believed that time and patience would bring things to a happy ending. And when she learned what congress meant in such concern, she found the idea so odious that she firmly refused to take any steps to save what her advisors called her honour.

The proof or disproof of charges of this sort against husband or wife—the former more frequently—was conducted by the court, and took place in the presence of surgeons and midwives. The practice so much angered Boileau that in his Eighth Satire he wrote indignantly:

*Jamais la biche en rut n'a, pour fait d'impuis-
sance,
Trainé du fond des bois un cerf à l'audience;
Et jamais juge, entr'eux ordonnant le Congrès,
De ce burlesque mot n'a sali ses arrêts.**

* Nor any hind, for impotence at rut,
Did e'er the stag into the Arches put;
Where a grave Dean the Congress might ordain,
And with that burlesque word his sentence stain.
(Rowe's translation.)

This ridiculous ordeal was, indeed, destined to be suppressed in 1677, as the result of the scandalous suit of the Comtesse de Langey against her husband.

Bertrande, in order that she should undergo no change of heart, went to church and prayed long and fervently. On the advice of a friend, she even sought help from a pious monk in a neighbouring monastery, who told her she should do penitence and counselled her to wear a monk's cord next to her skin. Bertrande consented, and asked him for the cord.

"My daughter," said the pious man, giving her a look that would have melted ice, "the cord would have no virtue in your hands. In order to drive out the evil spirit, I myself must tie the knot."

Bertrande, quite confused—for, we are told, she was as pious as she was beautiful—refused.

"What!" cried the monk. "Do you refuse, like a heretic, the penitence that God and the Holy Mother Church have ordained? Then I can do nought for you."

Bertrande, who was really quite religious, was deeply troubled in spirit, for she was afraid her refusal had led her into sinning. Yet she saw no way out of the difficulty.

A little later she went to the curé of Artigues, asking him to break the spell, and, in the words of Montaigne, set up a counter-battery of witchcraft. All the curé did was to submit Martin and Bertrande to various superstitious ceremonies, which the credulous of that epoch believed potent in the lifting of enchantments. They had to eat hearth cakes, made very thin like biscuits, cooked under the ashes and placed on the altar at the moment of the sacrifice; they were made to swallow several wafers that had not been consecrated; four masses were said by four different priests; and they were counselled to pray repeatedly. But everything was without avail.

One day one of Martin's friends, either out of ill-will or a desire to cheer him, read to him—for Martin himself could scarce spell—a pastoral from the Greek, which had just been translated by a professor of the University of Bourges, one Amyot.

This story, called "The Loves of Daphnis and Chloe," was very successful and must have acquainted him with all those things of which he seemed still to be ignorant, and, notably, that Love always has a difficult be-

ginning, as if obstacles existed only to make gratification the more keen.

But Martin had no desire to frequent other women, finding no pleasure except in his bride, whose freshness, grace and beauty filled him with so much wonderment that all others of her sex appeared ugly by comparison. Nowhere on earth, it seemed to him, was there a more perfect and charming creature.

True it is, indeed, that she united—or nearly so—the thirty charms that, according to an old saw, a woman must possess ere she can claim to be perfect: *

Three *white* things: the skin, the teeth and the hands.

Three *black* things: the eyes, eye-brows and eye-lashes.

Three *red* things: the lips, the cheeks and the nails.

Three *long* things: the body, the hair and the hands.

Three *short* things: the teeth, the ears and the feet.

Three *wide* things: the breasts, the forehead and the space between the eye-brows.

* A proverb reproduced in an old French book entitled *On the Praise and Beauty of Women*, put into eighteen lines of Latin verse by Cormier, and translated into Italian verse by Vincentio Calmeta.

Three *narrow* things: the mouth, the waist
and the tip of the foot.

Three *plump* things: the arm, the thigh and
the calf.

Three *free* things: the fingers, the hair and the
lips.

Three *little* things: the teats, the nose and the
head.

All of these thirty Martin found in Bertrande. And yet how many women can pretend to unite all these charms! Is it certain that she whom Ronsard has made so beautiful was cast in this mould of perfections? If she had had only the half of the principal beauties her defects were reduced to nothingness.

Now, was Martin madly in love with his Bertrande? In any case, he told her so in and out of season, truly, and not, like many giddy fellows, to convince himself, for fear of not being sure. In obedience to the promptings of his heart, he spoke his love, and at all hours manifested it to her by tender and woeful glances, sighs and passionate looks; and at night he had enchanting dreams, in which Bertrande had all the honour. But

when his loved one awoke and he tried to realize them, notwithstanding her pretty allurements and charming enticements, kisses and caresses, emotion would paralyse his ardour, despite the efforts he put forth to triumph over it; and, enamoured of her as he was, he could only curse niggardly Nature who had caused him to be sluggish and an object of shame.

Bertrande, ardent, and by no means inclined to discourage Martin's advances, would blush, vowing that she wished for nothing so much as to see him contented, calling him, teasingly, naughty and foolish, and murmuring in his ear that she would await the happy hour when he should grow well again, and that she wished never to love any other than her husband—for he was ticklish on that score, and jealous beyond reason.

Then, as if human will were immutable, they vowed and promised each other unceasing love. We believe readily what is said by one we love; but constancy was not within their power, as will be realized by those who know by experience how long such promises last.

However, one beautiful night, when the scented breeze that came in through the window from the woods and fields would have intoxicated the most unfeeling of mortals, and the air was charged with a subtle voluptuousness, Martin succeeded, as if by a miracle, in conquering his emotion, and overcoming every obstacle. Swept beyond the barriers of life by an overwhelming transport, he at last, with a sort of impetuous gladness, soared into the empyrean, and in that wonderful moment touched the limits of rapture.

But so well had he won his long struggle that Bertrande fell back in a deathlike swoon.*

* "During the first eight years," Gayot de Pitaval tells us, "his was the fate of Tantalus: however great his yearning, he never knew satisfaction. He believed himself bewitched. Finally, toward his twentieth year he was able to enjoy his wife's charms."

When he saw how cruelly this single combat had hurt his wife, and how her ardour and joy had been changed to sadness, making her pale and blue-lipped and cold, he was so grieved that he broke into tears, believing her at the point of death.

But Bertrande, hearing the voice she knew so well, recovered some of her strength, and looked through half-closed lids with marvellous tenderness at him who had caused her so much pain. Then she began to moan piteously, as if she would cry her heart out, and

soon, with a woeful sigh, fell back anew in a faint.

Poor Martin was in no mood for rejoicing. On the contrary, he repented of his act, calling himself a wicked, traitorous wretch, and wondered why the fruit of his sin had not fallen upon himself instead of upon Bertrande, who was innocent.

"Alas! my beloved," he cried, overcome with remorse. "The greatest misfortune that ever was has befallen me. Thinking to keep you I have lost you. Why, oh! why must this happy path lead to the valley of regret and tears!"

Then his pulse beat wildly, and he was stricken with fear; and so great was his anguish that his heart was all but crushed beneath the pangs of regret that Love inspired, and he repeated, in a mournful voice, the verses of Villon:

*Corps féminin, qui tant es tendre,
Polly, souef, si précieux,
Te fallait-il ces maux attendre!**

* O woman's body found so tender,
Smooth, sweet, so precious in men's eyes,
Must thou too bear such count to render?

(Swinburne's translation.)

Before night had flown, and whilst Bertrande still slumbered, he put out the wax taper and got up without waking her. Then, putting his cloak around his neck so as to cover his face, he whispered a rapid adieu, and, almost without drawing breath, stole from the room without a sound, and fled terror-stricken into the night.

Outside it was still dark, and the night knows no shame. But he had already set out on the road of misfortune, which was such as we shall hear.

III

JARNAC'S BLOW

*In Which We See That a Man Sometimes
Falls Into His Own Trap*

AN OLD saw, very current in those days,
declared that:

*Chastaigneraye Vieille-Ville et Bourdillon
Sont les trois grans compaignons.**

Without doubt they were the three most valorous men of that epoch, since the death of that worthy knight "without fear and without reproach," the noble Bayard, whose fame had spread throughout Christendom, and who was accepted by all as a paragon. Bayard, indeed, was a man of honour of marvellous sort, and his crown of laurels is verdant and immortal, for, in the words of the Loyal Servitor in His Story, "since the incarnation of the Redeemer there has been no prince, gentleman or other of condition who lived so fiercely among the cruel, so humbly among the meek, or so humanely among the lowly."

* Chastaigneraye, Vieille-Ville et Bourdillon are the three great companions.

The first was born in 1520, the second in 1509 and the third was somewhat older.

Imbert de la Platière, Lord of Bourdillon, equerry to the Dauphin before he became King, was returning from the campaign of Piedmont. He was on good terms with the King and Queen, esteemed by many for a man of virtue and honour, but not so by others, for renown spreads abroad evil no less than good; and some reproached him, although he was already a man of considerable worldly fortune, with having appropriated too many Savoy crowns, and having shared in the pillage of those Piedmont towns of ours which have cost us so much money and blood.

The Lord of Bourdillon was older than his two companions, but he carried himself so well that he seemed scarce more than thirty. He was graceful of manner, tall and well favoured as to person, and very brave, but also exceeding wise and calm in council and in action, even in his idle talk and rodomontade.

When, in order to seek diversion from the wars of Piedmont and distraction from the cavils and intrigues of the court, he came to dwell in his province—for he was from Gascony—Bourdillon loved to go hunting in the neighbourhood of Pamiers, where he had a

castle, in the company of the Lords of Barbezan and Lespan, sons of the master of Lautrec, of the noble house of Foix.

Full many a time he had brought his dogs on to the fields of Artigues, where there was very good hunting, and oft had Martin Guerre led him to the most productive spots.

Bourdillon had come to take an interest in the young rustic, who had such a pretty wife; and, whether in order to get rid of a troublesome husband—although he had recently married his second wife, Françoise de Birague, only daughter of the man who was to become Chancellor of France, and later cardinal—or from sincere goodwill, he had proposed to make Martin his equerry and take him with him when he returned in a few months to the Court.

The offer was tempting, but never, thought Martin, could he bring himself to leave so adorable a wife.

Yet when the mystery of the act of generation appeared to him, in its first revelation, as a ridiculous piece of folly, as Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia* has it, he immediately sought out Bourdillon.

Taking off his cap and dropping on one

knee, Martin very humbly requested the Lord of Bourdillon to give him a place among his attendants.

The latter consented, equipped him cap-a-pie, with a neckpiece and casque, and mounted him on a young war horse. The next day they left Pamiers.

During the journey, Bourdillon hid nothing from his young equerry as to what they were going to do in Paris and what rôle he was to play there.

If Martin was very ignorant of everything outside of Artigues and his beloved Bertrande, and showed more ingenuousness than became a young man of his years, in all truth he was no fool: beneath his naïveté he was meditative, and had even a certain shrewdness which needed only to be developed.

Martin understood that they had set out for Saint-Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, where the Court was held, with the object of taking sides with La Chateigneraye, who had taken up a challenge in the lists made by the Lord of Jarnac. It was a question of women, Martin understood, but he had some difficulty in fathoming the matter.

And of a verity the thing was obscure enough:

François de Vivonne, Lord of La Chateigneraye, was a young gentleman of Perigord of not more than twenty-six summers. Good fortune had given him for godfather King Francis, first of the name, who had had him brought up at Court, and who thought so well of him that he not only took the boy for one of his children of honour, but kept him near him and his room and called him his godson, or his "nursling." From the time that he left his nurse, powdered gold, steel and iron—considered sovereign remedies for strengthening the body—were mixed with his food and drink.* Very soon at Court he was admitted to be one of the most high-spirited and brave, and also one of the most intrepid and adroit at arms of any of his time. Likewise, he was famous for his skill at wrestling and at all manly exercises, to so great an extent that at the Court he had no equal; he was also celebrated for his physical strength, which was ever at the beck and call of his overweening conceit and his quarrelsome nature. "If he ever goes to hell," declared his father, "he is so strong that he will make the devils afraid,

* Cf. Brantôme.

and will turn them out and make himself master."

His nephew Brantôme, only seven years younger than he, declared that his uncle, blunt, hasty and a little flighty, "had only the defects of being too high-handed, difficult, if ever anyone was, and quarrelsome."

His particular concern, in the time of the previous king, had been to take care of the future by cultivating the good graces of the Dauphin Henri.

Now, Diana of Poitiers, abandoned by King Francis, had become, although no longer in her first youth, the Dauphin's mistress. From that moment she owed the younger woman who had supplanted her a grudge, and for twenty long years the rivalry between Diana of Poitiers, Duchess of Valentinois, and Anne of Pisseleu, created Duchess of Étampes, continued unappeased.

And yet Anne of Pisseleu had long ceased to be anything more than the nurse of the aging king, who had been cruelly wounded by the beautiful Ferronnière.

Diana, however, lost none of her ill-will on that account, and succeeded in persuading her lover, the Dauphin Henri, over whom she had

absolute power, to drop some offensive remarks regarding the brother-in-law of the Duchess of Étampes, the Comte Gui de Chabot, Lord of Jarnac, which were in reality intended for the ears of the Duchess herself.*

The Duchess of Étampes applied to the king for repudiation of this calumnious gossip, and Jarnac, who did not lack daring in either arms or love, undertook to punish the guilty party and declared that whosoever had spread these false reports had lied.

* "His sister-in-law keeps him and from her he gets what he wants in the way of funds to appear at Court," he said. He is reported to have added: "He is as intimate with his mother-in-law as with his sister-in-law."

The Dauphin was on sufficiently bad terms with his father, Francis I. The King had been very much attached to his eldest son, Francis, and when the latter died—he was, it was said, poisoned by Charles V of Spain—he had transferred all his affection to his third son, Charles, Duke of Orleans. In truth, the King was greatly vexed with Henri, who had become the Dauphin, because he had had the indelicacy to take for mistress she who had been the King's own and with whom he still had relations. Thus the Dauphin scarcely dared to proclaim himself the author of the scandal which his ill-natured gossip had provoked.

La Chateigneraye, always anxious to please

and seeing the Dauphin at a difficult pass, took up the challenge for his master, and announced that Jarnac himself had boasted to him about these scandalous reports, and that he would meet him in combat over the matter. But the old King, who was very displeased by the whole affair, refused to permit the duel.

On the death of the monarch, Jarnac, intolerant of any stain upon his honour, asked permission of the new King, as soon as he had taken the crown, to avenge the insult, and without much difficulty obtained his consent on April 23, 1547.

The news was soon on everyone's lips, and spread like a train of powder all over the kingdom.

In his ingenuousness Martin was stupefied at the importance given to this idle tittle-tattle about women whom the Villons, the Marots and the Brantômes very bluntly called strumpets—when they did not use an even coarser expression. And in very truth these royal concubines occupy more space in history than the legitimate queens, although it must be added that the queens of that time, whether

of England, Sweden or Russia, deserve the same epithet.

Arriving in Paris in the early days of July, 1547, Martin Guerre was immediately admitted among the attendants of La Chateigneraye, who had been joined by those of Vieilleville, as fine a troop of men at arms as any in Christendom.

If anyone from Artigues had seen him, wearing his pigeon-coloured scarf, proudly mounting guard before the door of the King's champion, in the Rue Thibault-aux-Dez,* he would scarce have recognized the timid, embarrassed husband of Bertrande.

* Now called
the Rue des
Bourdonnais.

On the ninth of the month of July, 1547, they left for Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

The King had had the field prepared on that magnificent terrace which overlooks Paris. In order to be present at this fight to the death, the provincial nobility, even the most impecunious, had set out as soon as the news of the combat had been bruited abroad, and began to arrive in great crowds. They slept in the forest and ate their meals upon the grass, whilst the poorer among them dined on stale bread and drank at the river. Among

them were figures of a bygone day: here a doublet dated from Louis XII and there a charger that had limped since Pavia.

* Brantôme:
Discourse on
Duels.

The next morning, July 10, at six of the clock, the lists were opened. The Court and the ambassadors who had been invited, among whom was remarked the Turkish envoy,* pompously took their seats on the stands. Elsewhere all those who had been admitted settled themselves as best they could. From Paris had come not only the Law and the University, but also an immense crowd, noisy and curious, of schoolboys, handicraftsmen and even vagabonds, herded together in the sweltering heat. They wanted to see not only the champions but also the successor of the knightly King, the fine actor, the great man with the big nose, the proud air and the noble sword, whose follies had already become legendary and whom Paris had not forgotten as quickly as the Court.

At seven of the clock the royal herald, Guienne, went to fetch the aggressor, La Chateigneraye, from his tent.

Seated on his horse, with drawn sword, he

entered the lists to the sound of a great flourishing of trumpets and beating of drums, escorted by his second, François de Guise, and accompanied by his two partisans, the Lords of Vieilleville and Bourdillon, each followed by his equerry. With them was a company of three hundred gentlemen, arrayed in the striking colours of La Chateigneraye—white and carnation, symbols of fearlessness and youth.

The champion "honoured" the camp by riding around it, and was then solemnly conducted back to his tent. The combat was not, in fact, to take place till the end of the day.

No one had any doubt, and La Chateigneraye less than any other, that the affair was finished before it had begun: evidently Jarnac was already done for.

For true it was that La Chateigneraye possessed not only exceeding skill in combat, but also invincible courage, and a thousand times had his valour been put to the proof, whilst Jarnac was known rather as courtier and beau, and thought more of tricking himself out finely than of arms and fighting.

The contempt he felt for his enemy and his not less great confidence in his own

prowess led La Chateigneraye to make plans for the celebration of his triumph. During a pause in the viols and hautboys, he left his tent and went to the Court and invited everyone to his forthcoming wedding.

It was good to be of his party, for it was also that of Diana of Poitiers and of the Guises. Nothing escaped them, any more than flies escape the swallows, in the way of positions, titles, bishoprics, abbacies, offices or other tasty morsels that were not incontinently snapped up.

Jarnac was in discredit at the new Court. However, in the Duke of Vendôme, very much opposed to the Guises, he found a Bourbon who offered to be his second; but the King raised an objection, and Jarnac, in the end, was assisted only by a tall equerry, belonging to a decaying family—Claude Gouffier, master of Boysi.

Indignant at such a show of partiality, the Duke of Vendôme withdrew from the lists and was followed by the royal princes.

For two months Jarnac had been preparing himself for death and had passed much time

in prayer. At the same time, and in order to neglect nothing, he had sent for a celebrated instructor, Captain Caize, who had invented certain secret passes and thrusts that baffled the most experienced of fighters. This Italian made enquiries and observations, and discovered that La Chateigneraye had a stiff arm from an arquebuse wound that he had received at the attack on Coni, in Piedmont, and upon this he constructed his plan of campaign.

Jarnac, being the "challenged," had the selection of arms: he chose the heavy Gothic armour worn in combats of this sort a hundred or two years earlier. This was an unpleasant surprise for his opponent, for the inflexibility of such accoutrement would hamper the movements of La Chateigneraye's wounded arm.

The discussion of this question of arms had taken up the greater part of the day,* and it was not until nearly seven o'clock that the King was informed that the combatants awaited his orders.

* Cf. Brantôme, the "Regulation on Arms that Jarnac sent to La Chateigneraye." There were thirty pieces of armament of body and horse.

The Court arrived, some on horses, chargers, jennets and Barbary horses, each rivalling

the other in accoutrement, with saddle-cloths of velvet embroidered with gold and silver; others in splendid carriages, with magnificent trappings, drawn by the most handsome of steeds.

The procession dismounted and drew up. First came the Queen with her ladies, less attended however than the favourite, Diana of Poitiers. Indeed, in the wake of the latter hummed a noisy swarm of young gentlemen and a bevy of young women richly attired, some of whom occasioned considerable astonishment, for they affected a boyish style, as Brantôme tells us, believing it seemly and becoming to bedizen themselves with caps, which they wore, like the fops of the period, pulled down over the brow, with a feather attached in the Guelph or Ghibelline fashion.

"Pooh!" thought Martin; "when these princesses and strumpets are stripped of their adornments and paint they are just like any other women and no more beautiful than my Bertrande!"

And he thought regretfully of the tender heart that he had so deliberately abandoned, and recalled the happy hours he had known. Then sadness began to fill his breast: he grew

angry with himself, despising his cowardice, and glowed with a desire to see again the nude body of his loved one.

But he had little time to spend on regret over his lot. His wild excursion into the unknown, the thousand incidents of the journey, the spectacle of the Court, of a truth, all interested him marvellously. Then, too, he was at last going to see the King.

He stood there, staring with all his eyes, his mouth agape, paralysed with astonishment, without noticing that his master had moved on. A lanky, blustering fellow rudely awoke him, asking him what he was doing stuck there like the gallows of Montfaucon, and if that was what an equerry was for.

The King appeared, in very deed, with a solemn, gloomy air, amidst a group of fine fellows with curled hair, wearing velvet caps and ruffs of starched linen. Tall, powerful and well-knit, but without elegance, he had a livid complexion, and wore a look that spoke of melancholy and weariness. Added to this his broad shoulders made him appear unwieldy. He was of gentle disposition, but slow-witted, thinking as little as possible, reading nothing, speaking rarely. Dominated

* François
Beaucaire de
Peguillon,
preceptor of
Cardinal Charles
de Lorraine:
Rerum Galli-
carum com-
mentaria ab
anno 1541 ad
annum 1562.

by a woman of forty-nine, his senior by about twenty years, he seemed to be made to be ruled rather than to rule.* Above all, said the Spanish envoy, Simon Renard, "he was born a Saturnian, that is, under the sinister star of fatal births and unhappy lives."

The heat, the long wait and fatigue had raised the excitement of the spectators to fever pitch. As soon as the king was seated, the heralds called for silence.

"Let the combatants begin," His Majesty ordered.

Instantly the followers of the two champions brought each from his tent and escorted them to the field of combat.

After a salvo of arquebuse and pistol, the herald began his request, as was the custom on such occasions, "that none make any sign, nor spit, nor cough, nor do anything whatsoever that might serve either of the combatants as warning."

As soon as this was done, two masses of steel were seen to move heavily upon each other: one La Chateigneraye, powerful and thick-set; the other, Jarnac, tall and ill-assured. La Chateigneraye was, indeed, short

of leg, broad-backed and not well-favoured as to features. Jarnac, three years older than his adversary, on the contrary, was handsome, elegant, tall—nay, even long—but delicate and weak.*

It was a bitter combat, and each blow was dealt with deadly purpose. Never was so much tenacity seen since God created Heaven and earth. But Nemesis, Socrates has said, follows the happy when, in their pride, they can no longer master themselves. Soon, whilst La Chateigneraye made a thrust, Jarnac, with a swift movement, struck his adversary a blow behind the knee.

The blow was so effective that La Chateigneraye reeled and seemed dazed, giving Jarnac time to get in another stroke with such force that this time the tendons were cut. La Chateigneraye fell heavily to the ground.

"Give me back my honour," cried Jarnac, "and ask mercy of God and the King . . . Give me back my honour!"

La Chateigneraye remained speechless.

Then, crossing the field of combat, and going up to the King, Jarnac dropped on one knee and said: "Sire, I beseech you to consider me an honourable man. I give you La

* Brantôme, in his Discourse on Duels, is more lenient toward his uncle: he describes him as being neither too tall nor too short, well set, very muscular and not too fleshy. He pictures him a little too indulgently in contrast with his adversary.

Chateigneraye. Take him, Sire! It was only our youth that caused all this."

His Majesty replied never a word.

In face of the King's persistent silence, Jarnac went back toward his adversary, without going too near him—for he knew him to be capable of spending his last burst of strength resolutely—and, striking his breast with his steel gauntlets, cried out repeatedly:

"Non sum dignus, Domine!"

Then he besought La Chateigneraye to commune with himself and think of his salvation. In reality, he sought rather to gain time until the King should have thrown the staff. But in a sudden frenzy, the wounded man rose upon one knee, seized his sword and, making a desperate movement, seemed as though he were about to let it fall upon Jarnac.

"Do not move," cried Jarnac, "or I will kill you."

"Kill me, then!" replied La Chateigneraye, as he fell back in such sorry state that it seemed as though he had died on the spot.

For the second time Jarnac went to the King. And 'twas pitiful to behold.

Dropping on one knee, he cried: "Sire, Sire,

I implore you to let me give him to you. . . . Consider me a man of honour! If you have a battle to be fought no gentleman will serve you more willingly. Let me prove my affection for you, and that I am a faithful vassal."

The King remained obstinately silent and impenetrable.

The wounded man lay without succor, bathed in blood. Jarnac, overcome with pity, drew near to him once more and said with emotion:

"Chateigneraye, my old companion, acknowledge your Creator and let us be friends."

La Chateigneraye was sore stricken and at the point of death. The Constable, as the principal, first and oldest officer of the Crown, went down into the lists, as his station and duty directed, and looked at the dying man. Then, returning to the King, he said:

"Sire, he must be taken away."

The crowd began to manifest indignation and murmurs arose. The King at last saw that he must break his silence, and, lowering his great shoulders, shot at Jarnac in a dry tone:

"Do you yield him to me?"

"Yes, Sire . . . Am I not a man of honour?"

"You have done your duty, and your honour must be returned to you," said the King weakly, throwing his staff into the lists.

This action carried with it the force of a law, so that after it each of the combatants had to stop and withhold his blow, even were he on the point of striking, and then suddenly the military judges and camp guards would come upon the scene and separate them.

The dying man had been carried away on a litter to his tent. The crowd expected that the conqueror would, as was the ancient custom, be carried in triumph around the field to the blare of trumpets. But, according to Brantôme, Vandosme, afterwards King of Navarre, dissuaded the King, who, quickly forgetting his whilom favourite, "was by no means without resoluteness, and almost let it be ordered that the said Lord of Jarnac pass around the camp, in triumphal fashion, with trumpets blowing and drums beating, and this, notwithstanding that Monsieur de Boysi, a personage of great wisdom and Jarnac's second, was of the same opinion. But if the King's plan had been followed certain it is

there would have been a great uproar, for the temptation was very considerable." The followers of La Chateigneraye, numbering five hundred gentlemen all arrayed in his colours, wanted only an excuse to break through the lists, leap into the camp and promote a sedition and a disturbance that would have brought no one any good. "That is why," added the Marshal Vieilleville, "it is good to be wise and modest on such occasions."

To cut a long story short, Jarnac withdrew, followed by his own partisans, wearing his colours, white and black.

"That's the way of the world!" said Brantôme.

All the same, Jarnac's blow was to pass into history.

IV

MARTIN GOES TO WAR

*In Which No One Knows When He'll
Come Back*

FOR the La Chateigneraye party that woeful and unhappy day was full of bitterness, the more so since the royal approbation had been withdrawn from the quondam favourite. It was said that this must be imputed to the character of the King, who loved nothing and was inconstant in his friendships. As long as these attachments lasted he favoured without measure those whom he liked, and bestowed on them an infinite bounty; then he would dismiss them, without knowing why, unless it was because he was tired of them.*

* Brantôme and
Pasquier.

The Court did not wait for the death of the defeated champion to follow the King's example. When its wings have been torn off, the most beautiful butterfly is no more than a caterpillar. It was soon seen how

many bore him hatred for the jealousy his advancement and glory had caused them. The Court is a Proteus that changes shape every day: in the beginning it laughs with those upon whom Fortune smiles, then frowns and sometimes bites them when they no longer have any power, forgetting those who served most and gave of their best. But worthless fellows, once attracted there, would rather perish than go away.*

* Alain Chartier:
The Courtesan.

La Chateigneraye was not of their kidney. So deeply did he feel humiliated by his defeat that although his youth seemed capable of winning the struggle with Death, he no longer wished to live. Overwhelmed with grief, he could not endure giving up his proud and haughty manner which was a part of him. The following night he took his sword and, kissing the hilt in memory of the cross, said aloud: "Miserere mei Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam." Then he tore away the cloths that bound his wound, and, becoming suddenly wan and weak, left the dreams of this world and expired.

Whether that were for good or evil Heaven alone knows. In any case, he was as much lamented as his virtues, or, more truly, his

courage, merited. His friends scarce went into paroxysms of grief over his passing, for they feared rather than loved him, saying that he sought bloodshed too much, and that few men of that sort end well. But no one is perfect, says the proverb, and the Creator endows none of his creatures with all the virtues.

Meantime, his two partisans, Vieilleville and Bourdillon, indifferent to the fact that persecution is the test of faithful friends who despise prohibitions and disgrace, began to tremble for their lives.

*C'étoient amis que vent emporte,
Et il ventoît devant sa porte,**

according to the celebrated troubadour Rutebeuf. Adversity is ever lonely, as prosperity is always well-attended.†

Vieilleville went back to his domain in Anjou, and Bourdillon, forgetting that he had taken the noble knight Bayard as his model,

* The wind sweeps off such friends of yore,
And the wind blew strong outside his door.

† The poet Ovid expressed the same idea:
"Donec eris felix multos numerabis amicos.
Tempora si fuerint nubila, solus eris."

disappeared without a thought for his followers, including the luckless Martin Guerre, whom he had made his equerry—all which, it is true, in no wise prevented him from finding favour with the Queen Mother on the death of Francis II and becoming marshal in 1562.*

* He died at
Fontainebleau
in 1567.

Martin soon realized that Fortune, particularly where the great are concerned, is fickle. Feeling like a fish out of water among all these people, of whom he knew nothing, he stayed in Paris as short a time as possible, like a man who is anxious to set out for the spot where someone waits for him alone.

And, wisely, he forthwith took the road back to the fold.

The great difficulty was the remoteness of that spot, and the return journey was not so easy as had been the outward one. He had to live, and he was without resources, having retained from his ephemeral prosperity only his horse, his broadsword, his belt, his light helmet and some trifling pieces of silverware that he had picked up at the sack of the tent of La Chateigneraye after the combat.

That had indeed been a pretty piece of work. The famous supper, to which La Chaigneraye, in his conceit, had invited the Court, had been quickly carried off by the Swiss troops and the lackeys; pots and sauce-pans had been overturned, the soups and courses being spilt or devoured, and the silver services, borrowed from seven or eight houses of the Court, scattered, carried off and stolen. All this, it is true, had not happened without blows from the halberds and staffs of the captains and men of the guard.

In order to eat, the wretched, penniless equerry was reduced to selling his possessions one by one to the villains on the road; and he soon found himself destitute.

When he was relieved of everything he thought of taking the long robe, but was found too ignorant. So he could say with the poet:

*Il regrettoit n'avoir pas plus étudié.
 Mais quoy, il fuyoye l'écolle,
 Comme faict le mauvoys enfant;
 Et, en disant ceste parole,
 A peu que le cueur ne lui fend.
 Sur le printemps de sa jeunesse folle,*

*Il ressembloye l'arondelle qui vole
 Puis çà, puis là; l'aage le conduisoit
 Sans paour ne soing, où le cueur lui disoit.**

Then he had no other thought but of his dear Bertrande and his happiness with her. And all this had come from fleeing from a first dread!

Someone suggested he should become a monk, but he felt no inclination to be tonsured, and the life of a monastery seemed to him too rigid, especially for the laymen.*

* The lay brothers were assigned the menial work in the monastery.

Remembering that he had for a time been an equerry, during his wanderings he became a castle jester; but he was luckless enough to have a master who sometimes laughed and sometimes had him punished. He thought the hardships of a free life better to his taste, and fled.

He even became an improvised physician,

*"If in my time of youth, alack!
 I had but studied and been sage
 Nor wandered from the beaten track,
 I had slept warm in my old age.
 But what did I? As bird from cage,
 I fled the schools; and now from pain,
 In setting down this on page,
 My heart is like to cleave in twain."

François Villon and Clément Marot (Payne's translation).

but ill luck befell him, and he was forced to move on.

Later, having notwithstanding collected a few pence, he became a great drinker and lost his head.

Thenceforth he led an anxious, wandering life, like that of a hare between two furrows, and lived only on berries, garlic and even grass snakes. Like a famished wolf he brought every trick to bear, marauding and finding shelter as best he could. By day he hid, and at night wandered abroad with worse rogues and riffraff than himself.

After having thus roamed about, and had numerous unpleasant adventures, he found himself one day in Bordeaux. There a new surprise awaited him.

A sickness, of which he understood nothing, seemed to consume his flesh. At first he thought that it was the leprosy, and knocked at a lazar-house. But that was not the asylum he needed.

In short, during the several days he had spent in the capital of the kingdom, where, no doubt, he had been too partial to certain houses of ill fame, it seems that a lady of easy virtue had bestowed on him that ill which

Italy, after the Crusades, had so generously presented to her invaders. This malady was, indeed, no rare thing, since the guards at the barriers of the Louvre had proved no protection against it for the kings, the late one among others.

The bitterness he felt on making this sorry discovery cannot be described, or even imagined—save by those who have had a similar experience. Deeply mortified, he did not dare to return to Bertrande in that condition.

What, he wondered, was he to do, and what was to become of him?

A very old fable about two pigeons—"The Lover and the Beloved"—which they used to tell him when he was a child, came back to his memory.* For what reason had he undertaken this journey into a far country? Cursing his curiosity, he repeated the words:

*Quand reverray-je, hélas! de mon petit village
Fumer la cheminée? Et en quelle saison
Reverray-je le clos de ma pauvre maison,
Qui m'est une province et beaucoup d'avant-
age!**

Never had he let himself envy those fortunate beings who, without eating of the fruit of the labours of others, live peacefully in

* By the Brahmin Pilpay, who lived two thousand years before our era, and whose fables were translated into Latin verse in 1262 by Jean de Capoue. This fable inspired La Fontaine's "Two Pigeons."

* Joachim du Bellay.
When, alas!
shall I behold
again the smoke
from the chim-
neys of my little
village? And in
what season
shall I set
eyes on the
garden of my
lowly house,
which to me is
a province, and
how much more
beside!

their happy little cottages, in which—by contrast with what he had glimpsed elsewhere in so short a time—abode virtue without sham, and rectitude, where quarrels, murmuring and envy were not, and Nature reigned supreme. Yet, if he had wished, he might still have had a roof over his head and a soft couch! And so, no longer resisting the overpowering thought, and dragging one foot after the other like one half-dead, he meditated, and decided without more ado to take the road for Artigues.

But on the way he stupidly picked a quarrel with a soldier from Piedmont, who had served under La Chateigneraye, and who maintained that such a valorous man, who wielded so pretty a sword, could not have been killed in combat by one who was not his equal. Martin, without doubt that day very much in his cups, took the contradiction with ill grace, and fetched the incredulous fellow a blow that sent him on the road taken by La Chateigneraye. "What a debt my uncle must owe this unfortunate fellow for dying for him," remarks Brantôme, "and how great must be his thanks in the other world,

if the souls up above have feeling and gratitude."

As for Martin, however deep his regret for Bertrande may have been, he had no choice but to cross the frontier and seek refuge in a foreign land.

And thus it befell that he found his way to Hendaye, in Biscay, in that province of Spain which still enjoyed the privileges that Charles V had granted it when the little Martin and his parents had left the country of the Baconts or Bascongados, where he had been born and whence Fortune should never have allowed him to stray!

Charles V was seeking, in the territories under Spanish domination, recruits for continuing the struggle in Germany with the Protestant princes. He had just defeated the Elector of Saxony at Muhlberg,* but he still had to bring the Landgrave of Hesse to reason, and to strip them both of their estates, and above all to reorganize his armies in Flanders, and replace the dead, the wounded and the deserters, who in those days were very numerous.

* On the Elbe,
April 24, 1547.

* Gayot de
Pitaval.

In his sorry condition—he was not even able to continue as valet in the household of the Cardinal of Burgos *—Martin Guerre jumped at the chance and enlisted.

Turning his back on Artigues, with tears in his eyes and sorrow for Bertrande in his heart, he took the road for Madrid, with a band of others in similar straits. The little group set off, prudently surrounded by halberdiers.

On the road, at the gates of Segovia, he was stupefied by a spectacle that suddenly presented itself, and as he was, like everybody in those days, superstitious and a believer in miracles, he took it for an evil omen.

Upon a richly ornamented litter, escorted by men at arms and dignitaries of the church, lay a body that was carried with great pomp. A woman held a hand of the dead man, which hung out of the catafalque, and which from time to time she would kiss deliriously.

She was the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, the mother of Charles V, Queen of Castile, Joanna the Mad, who was conveying to the convent of Sainte-Claire, at Tordesillas, in Old Castile, the embalmed body of her

husband, Philip the Handsome, that she had laid beside her in her bed every night for more than thirty years, tending and watching over him, refusing to leave him, convinced that her love would reanimate him in the end.

And yet how little he had shown himself in love with her!

This procession of the dead, which they had encountered on a day reputedly of evil omen, was full of portent. But the life of adventure that he was destined to lead—for he did not tarry long at Madrid—was soon to sweep away this memory along with his dark thoughts and regrets.

For Martin went off to the wars. And knew not when he would be back!

For two years he fought in Germany, without truce and without prowess, but not without quarrels, for he was looked upon as a French turncoat by the Spaniards, already very scornful of all save their good selves. If we may believe the Loyal Servitor, they were full of bluster and eaten up with vanity, having honour ever upon their lips, and never admitted being worsted except it were by some witchcraft.

Then Martin served in Flanders, under the brother of the Cardinal of Burgos, who was very much interested in the conduct of the war, and in whose household he had for a short time been valet. He was present at the battle of Saint-Laurent,* which was won by the Spanish troops, commanded by the Duke Philibert of Savoy, on August 10 in the year 1557, from the Constable de Montmorency, who was taken prisoner. In token of his joy the melancholy Philip II made the votive offering of the gloomy Escorial.

It was indeed a great victory for the Spaniards; but, for Martin Guerre, it was against his king. And therein lay his misfortune.

* Suburb of Saint-Quentin, unsuccessfully defended by the Admiral Coligny. The city of Saint-Quentin was taken on August 27 following. M. d'Enghien was killed there.

V

MISTRESS PENELOPE

*In Which We See Only Wisdom and
Virtue, and That They Are Difficult
to Keep*

*Seulette suis par tout et en tout estre
Seulette suis où je voise, où je siée,
Seulette suis plus qu'autre rien terrestre,
Seulette suis de chascun délaissée,
Seulette suis durement abaisée,
Seulette suis souvent esplourée,
Seulette suis sans mary demourée.**

WHEN people went up to the farm of the Rols they heard this ballad sung, beside a cradle, by a young woman in mourning, who was both beautiful and young, but who seemed wrapped in a melancholy that approached despair.

Bertrande found it impossible to believe that her loving Martin had gone off and left her thus. In her judgment, he had been the victim of an accident, or, at least, the plaything of some magic spell. And she had the

* Lines by
Christine de
Pisan.

Alone am I
everywhere and
in every condi-
tion. Alone
whither I go, or
rest, Alone
more than any-
thing on earth,
Alone and for-
saken by all,
Alone am I
cruelly humbled,
Alone often
overcome with
tears, Alone I
remain without
a mate.

search for him carried far and wide, making a vow to St. Allivergot that she would fulfill if she found her husband again.

But all her efforts were fruitless.

When she saw that he was not to be found, Bertrande was stricken sore: she thought she would die of melancholy at thus being left a widow in the sweet springtide of her youth, and sighs broke from her continuously.

One day, however, she had to submit to conviction: some one from Pamiers had seen Martin leave in the direction of the north, proudly riding behind the Lord of Bourdillon. Then another and another testimony was produced, till doubt was no longer possible. His abandonment of her was only too patent. Woeful, indeed, she was, giving vent to the most pitiful moans that have ever been heard, so that he who would not have offered prayer and orison for her, and whose eyes would not have filled to hear her sobbing, must needs have a heart of stone.

In any case, she fell into such a state of melancholy that people no longer recognized her.

Cruel Martin! What had she done to deserve such treatment?

With time everything passes, except the love of God, and she fasted and went to the churches to offer prayers for the weal and the return of Martin.

It has been stated on reliable authority * that she united goodness and beauty, and she lavished every care and all her affection on the child born of that night of triumphant love. She, too, no less than Martin, had had her trials, for she had been obliged to suffer the presence—indiscreet and somewhat revolting—of a curator ad ventrum who, from the moment Martin had been declared absent, had been imposed on her during the entire span of her pregnancy and even during her delivery.*

Little Sanxi—for that was the name of the child—grew from day to day.

Meantime, many were the suitors who gladly considered Martin as lost for good and all. Impelled by a desire to win her good graces, and believing himself the only one worthy of her regard, each vowed to Bertrand that he loved her more than any other man in the world, and ventured to importune her for that which he most desired, for widows, for many reasons, are fanciful: young

* M. de Coras.—
Gayot de Pitaval.

* This precaution against fraud still remains in the French Code: art. 393 C. C.

girls, for the most part, are ruled by fathers and mothers, relations and guardians, and not by their own good pleasure; whereas those in widowhood, and therefore with full liberty, make their choice after their own hearts, and take their husbands freely for love and sweet contentment. The memory of the first husband quickly flies out of the window of the room which plays anew the rôle of bridal chamber. Truly says the proverb: "There is more show than sorrow about a woman who has lost her husband."

Further, laying aside all honesty, and believing that women are readier to seek distraction in love than in marriage, they sought her eagerly out of unworthy and illicit desire, telling her maliciously that the gates of Paradise are by no means closed against true lovers, for love is a fire which so consumes the amorous that they are exempt from the torments of Purgatory.*

* *Heptameron* of the Queen of Navarre: Twenty-sixth Story.

But Bertrande was no person to lose her head over these roguish fellows, whose conscience, heart and understanding knew not God, honour or virtuous love, and very wisely she avoided them, for above all else she wanted to be able to walk with her head held

high and not be looked upon as a frivolous woman.

Nonetheless, she was hard put to it to outwit their projects and base designs, and her son Sanxi had neither the years nor the wisdom of Telemachus to send the more venturesome of these knaves about their business. But Bertrande could not believe that the wanderer would not one day return, and she remained faithful to him, in the Rols farm, having a care to frequent only good and upright folk, and never to receive any one in secret and behind closed doors. Her heart was with her absent husband, and, being very devout, she went frequently to church, and sought the protection of Our Lord, supplicating Him to preserve her from all wicked affection, or rather let her heart perish like the female ferret which prefers death to staining her coat.

Thus no one succeeded in luring her from the straight and narrow way, and she lived respected and loved by all, even her domestic servants.

And so she patiently waited, revealing by her tears that she could not forget the absent, that she still loved him and that, except for

God's mercy and the constancy with which He had endowed her, she had been overcome by her great sorrow and melancholy.

To occupy her thoughts she busied herself, without respite or reprieve, with her domestic affairs, in which she was perfection itself. She spun wool and wove clothing for her son, like virtuous Penelope awaiting at Ithaca the return of Ulysses.

And when, now and then, she would consent to gambol in the meadows and play pell-mell, or return to the simple pleasures in which young women may decently take part and of which she had no reason to deny herself sempiternally, she carried herself so properly, always accompanied by her sisters-in-law, who resembled her in character, and other maidens of good repute, that no one had just cause to form any bad opinion.

For these pastimes she would dress herself modestly, rarely otherwise than in black, which, of a truth, consorted well with the exceeding whiteness of her skin. At the most, she would permit herself tawny-grey, violet or blue at the bottom of her hose. She wore a thicker veil than was usual, and rarely went out without her low headdress, if not also with

one of those little Venetian masks of velvet which had become so fashionable, even in the provinces, since the late king, and which were not yet the exclusive right of the ladies of the nobility.

She was far from lacking taste in dressing herself, and found ever some new and pretty device to enhance her beauty; but she was likewise always careful to see that her deportment gave her the right to talk with whom she wished and protection from idle gossip, for she was by no means indifferent to the opinion of her neighbours. Yet withal, this did not prevent her from having considerable success, and everyone offered to render her service. For she was exceeding fair of face as also of form, and of queenly stature, which was rare in that region, quite near to Spain, where tallness is not common and for that reason is the more prized. And this she accompanied by a grace of manner and a pretty fashion of walking which gave her a comely air of demureness and sweetness. Her black eyes and hair (that lovely adornment of women's heads and crown of their beauty), which she dressed gracefully in the style of the Roman matrons or in a single coil, offset

the fairness of her complexion. Above all, she had an adorable mouth and most tempting withal, which deserved all that was said by an admirer of another beauty, the handsome Paule, who was living at that time, and not very far away—at Tholoze: “a pretty little mouth of coral with, in the middle of the lower lip, a tiny opening, which was so becoming that as soon as the eye lit upon it one felt impelled likewise to let his lips alight there, too, and, mouth to mouth, gather a fragrant little kiss.”*

* “Description of the Beauties of a Lady of Toulouse, Named Paule,” in which the author, Gabriel de Minut, Baron de Castéras, passes in review, with a good deal of fervour, this masterpiece, in full detail, as he thinks—indeed, for certain, for he omits not a single one.

And yet scarce did this village maiden—for she was hardly more—give any sign of satisfaction at her beauty, appearing indifferent to it, and only heedful of her honour.

However, one evening Bertrande was returning to the farmhouse after a walk.

There was a radiant sunset, and, at a turn of the road, near a little arbour fashioned with branches, she had sat down on the grass.

Never did she tarry to admire the extensive view, surpassingly beautiful and agreeable, that opened out from this point. Toward the west, lit up by the sun’s last rays, stretched a vast plain planted with mulberry and olive

trees and dotted with tiny houses and villages. In the foreground was the town of Fossat, and further off lay Verdun, Montesquieu-Valvestre, Rieux and Carbonne.

She meditated upon her past life. Moments of pleasure are valued only by the regrets they leave behind. But the past is only a dream, and the future a mystery. How quickly had her happiness sped away; and without happiness one no longer wishes to live! Was all her youth to be spent in vexation, sadness and regret?

Yet she thought, however, that it were better that God alone knew her heart than that she should confide in a man, who might betray her trust, and she had the strength of mind to resist the inclination.

Albeit, she could not but admit to herself that there was one to whom she was not so indifferent as she could have wished.

She was sitting there with her thoughts, listening to the nightingale, when Jehan d'Escarbeuf came out of the footpath from Carla-Bayle.

Bertrande knew him quite well, and before she had been betrothed to Martin they had played together as children.

If she had been certain that she was in truth a widow, Jehan was the man with whom she would have entered into the bonds of a second marriage, in order to taste again the sweet fruit of the god Hymenaeus, and so find new happiness; for she knew that he loved her more than himself, while for her part, even if she concealed her feeling toward him, she could not deceive herself.

They talked for a moment, and as twilight had nearly given place to night, he suggested that he should accompany her as far as the farm.

Words flowed freely, for the great friendship they bore each other was so beyond reproach that they took no pains to conceal it.

Bertrande made no attempt to hide from him how much sorrow she had been caused by Martin's departure and the solitude in which she now lived. Jehan tried to persuade her that after so long a time she could marry anew, or at least have her marriage annulled. And why not? A proverb of the region said: "A woman without a companion, hope without work, a ship without a rudder come to nothing." And then, to continue in her present state would be so great a crime! Could

one demand of her the patience of Griselda, and had she not been sufficiently freed of obligation? What a caprice to be young and beautiful and yet wish, for the satisfaction of a flighty scruple, to restrain her ardour, and so, little by little, dry up, waste away and age long before her time, losing the luster of her beauty, which made her esteemed and loved, and in the flower of her youth to become, for the rest of her days, solitary, abandoned and cold as ice, passing so many widowed nights, the laughing-stock of everyone; and all this for love of Paradise! He added, even—for he was something of an unbeliever—that she would make a fine mistake if there were no paradise in the other world, as he had heard it said by a colonel in the city.*

* The future
Marshal Arnaud
de Gontaut-
Biron.

However, it would take too long to recount all of his friendly discourse and the savoury words that he murmured to her. Briefly, this poor martyr to a fire so pleasant that, the more one burns the more he wishes to burn, thereby increasing the torment, vowed and promised his fidelity, affirming that his words came from his heart no less than from his lips; that, in fact, no one in the world loved her as much as he, and that he felt himself become

something more than he had been until that moment.

Never, she replied, had there been more grievous affliction, nor greater despair; but so long as she nourished hope of Martin's return, she had no wish to be comforted or seek the ultimate remedy, although she could have solaced herself for the loss of the husband who had abandoned her, and forgotten her past sorrows. The truth is, she found it good to hear Jehan talk, and, also, she felt in her heart something to which she had not hitherto been accustomed. But she had no desire to lose in hell the vision of her God and have nothing but the horrible sight of the Devil. And when Jehan showed her Martin's felonious, disloyal and detestable conduct, she replied that notwithstanding her regret at seeing tears in his eyes and her joy at having inclined such a man as he to love, she was convinced that women must take a different view of such things, and should cleave to patience, modesty and virtue, to which God had so enjoined them; that they should fear Love, who takes pleasure in tormenting the poor as well as the rich, the weak and the strong, who blinds them to the point of forgetting God and con-

science, who impels them to run more risks and dangers than a mariner in the most hazardous perils of the sea, and, finally, who, in any case, had played her so sorry a trick. Thus she wished for nothing more than honest friendship, with no other thought.

Considering that she held such principles, and that she did such good and virtuous things that the malignity of the most perfidious of beings must needs have been quenched, it is easy to believe Gayot de Pitaval when he says that the tongue of slander found nothing to publish against her. And, indeed, one could not but be struck by her virtue, esteeming her for her considerable charity, although her alms-giving was done in secret; and rank her among the most honourable, for womanly intelligence, virtue and goodness are not found only in the hearts of princesses, nor all love and honour where they most frequently are thought to be.

One incident, indeed, fed her hope of seeing Martin return.

One day she had gone into the dark chapel of the church of Artigues to pray. Therein was a sepulchre, containing life-like statues

and several recumbent stone figures of men at arms. After having made her devotions, she wished to place a lighted candle in the sepulchre, in which was interred the body of a great noble reputed to have been all but saint. A drop of burning wax fell upon one of the reclining figures, who began to move and opened an eye. Bertrande, terrified, instantly fled, calling out that a miracle had taken place. Those who were in the church came running up, some to ring the bell, others to see the miracle; but everything was still again. It was a summer's day, and a vagabond, entering the church and feeling drowsy, had taken the notion to stretch himself out in the cool, dark chapel among the figures of stone. The drop of molten wax had half-awakened him; but he went off to sleep again immediately.

Bertrande was convinced that God, of His sovereign sapience and mercy, gives His creatures secret warning of happenings, good or evil, that are prepared for them, and that He had thus revealed to her that Martin still lived, that he was now a man of arms, and, by the look she had received, that he still thought of her and would return to console

her for her great unhappiness—all which made her joyful beyond measure.

Sanxi approached his seventh year and she was still waiting; and when she passed by, her wooers, whose unworthy love and dishonourable attentions she had rejected, would hum a popular old Spanish ballad which, in jesting vein, they had renamed the ballad of "Martin goes to war," seeing therein much witty facetiousness.

It was the plaintive story of the sorry misadventure of a lady, anxious for her lord, and a soldier coming home from the crusades:

*Madame à sa tour monte, si haut qu'el peut
monter,*

Et voit son page, tout de noir habillé:

*"Beau page, mon beau page, quel nouvelle
apportez?"*

*—"Aux nouvelles que j'apporte vos beaux
yeux vont plourer: . . .*

A l'entour de sa tombe, romarins on planta

*. . .
Sur la plus haute branche le rossignol chanta
. . ."* *

Then, with unworthy roguishness, they would break out into the refrain:

* Madame went up into her tower, as high as she could go, and saw her page all dressed in black. "Page, my fine page, what news do you bring?" "At the news I bring your beautiful eyes will fill with tears: . . . around his tomb they planted rosemary . . . and on the highest branch a nightingale sang . . ." The subject of the ballad was the same as that which was destined to be parodied, first several years later by the burlesque "Funeral of the Duke of Guise," and then in the 18th century by the famous Marlborough song.

Martin s'en va-t'en Guerre:

Pan, pan, ratapan.

Ne sait quand reviendra:

*Patati, patata.**

Like the roe which, when mortally stricken, vainly seeks to leave its wound behind by flight, Bertrande, without listening any further, would quickly go up to her chamber, weeping and overcome with vexation and grief; and she came near wishing to do herself some hurt, whereas she should have looked upon these evil-minded fellows as triflers, despising their stupidity and bothering her head about them not one jot.

* Martin has gone to war: Pan, pan, ratapan.

And knows not when he'll be back: Patati, patata.

VI

THE WARRIOR RETURNS

*In Which Penelope Wonders If He Really
Is Ulysses*

BERTRANDE found it impossible to banish Martin from her thoughts, for, as a shrewd moralizer has said, "There is one who does not forget; the one who is forgotten."

However, the day after Mid-Lent in the year 1554—old style—a man presented himself at Artigues. He was swarthy of visage, with a beard and moustache like a reiter.* Otherwise he had the lineaments of Martin Guerre.

* Reiter—
German horse
soldier of the
14th and 15th
centuries.
(Trans.)

He went boldly up to the Rols farm, and, on reaching the house, asked for Bertrande, his wife. He was told she had gone to town on her nag, whither, to tell truth, she had gone to consult an astrologer who was believed to reveal marvels of the future, although true Christians should hold that God alone knows what is to come. But such is the irresistible

curiosity which causes so many to lose themselves in dreams!

Then, calling upon neighbours and embracing old friends, with a word for each, the newcomer strolled around the farm, which he seemed to know well, even down to the warren.

Homer in the *Odyssey* tells how the dog, Argus, that Ulysses had brought up, and of which he had made no use because, before the animal was strong enough to run, he had been obliged to leave for Troy, began to lift up his head and prick up his ears as soon as he saw his master. Approaching Ulysses, he wagged his tail and seemed ready to die of joy at seeing his master once more, twenty years after his departure. Ulysses, touched at being recognized by his faithful dog, shed tears, which he promptly wiped away.

The newcomer had no occasion to show any such emotion, for the dog paid him not the least attention. Yet the animal had in the past frequently hunted with his master, and, as everyone knows, these friends of man remember those who have been fond of them.

Bertrande was not due back till supper time. But the four sisters of the prodigal husband and the master and mistress of Rols did not hesitate to recognize their brother and son-in-law. And so it was with all those who had known him before his flight, even his friends and old comrades. He had, indeed, the features, bearing, gait, inflexion of voice and gestures of Martin Guerre—and all the thousand and one peculiarities which characterize a man. He had retained a recollection of everything; he remembered the place of every object, and recalled to this person and that divers circumstances with precision and detail. In his conversation he was reticent and appeared to take certain things for granted, as if he knew more than he cared to say, and all this with an ease and assurance of manner such as can only exist between folk who are, or have been, on terms of perfect familiarity.

Of a verity, there was no room for doubt.

Bertrande, who had been informed by one of her brothers-in-law, especially despatched to prepare her, of this unexpected homecoming, was much perplexed, and with considerable prudence and sapience declared that

all this could only be a diabolical hoax and sorcery of hell.

The newcomer grew angry with Bertrande and reproached her bitterly for having so poor a recollection of her husband and so little pity for him, and with showing him so much ingratitude and disloyalty. Then he flew into a passion, and began to utter all those things that unbounded rage lets loose. But when he saw this was not producing the effect he wanted, he calmed down a little, but, with the most vexed air imaginable, added: "Is it thus that a wife should receive her husband, guilty though he be of a certain inconstancy, which he has since profoundly regretted, and of which he promises to show himself sincerely and deeply penitent?"

Bertrande changed her manner as meekly and modestly as she could so as not to offend him, and replied in a voice at once sad and full of emotion that she was prompted neither by unkindness nor scorn.

"I remember very well," she said, "what manner of man you were when you went away so inexplicably. Yes, you seem to me the same to-day; but I do not trust my eyes well enough, and the fidelity I owe my husband

and myself obliges me to use the utmost caution. Do not be angry with me. Ever since you left, full seven years ago, I have always been afraid someone might come along and deceive me by false appearances. We women are continually being taken advantage of. My heart has no desire but to be convinced that you are in truth my beloved Martin, and, notwithstanding your base action and the little cause you have given me to love you, I have wept over your departure and remained marvellously attached to you. But I value my honour as my life, and before pronouncing on so strange and unforeseen a return I would reflect further and have a talk with you in private."

Little did she think that she was taking the same attitude, and using nearly the same words, as Penelope when Ulysses returned to Ithaca from the isle of Calypso.

The newcomer became very angry, and, putting on an injured air, declared that her incredulity pained him greatly; that he did not understand why she was so much afraid of her husband, who sought nothing but his lawful rights, and assured her that what he told her was truth; that if there still remained with

her any vestiges of their past love, her pity must inevitably overcome her resistance; that the tender love she had borne him had been converted into hate, and that, prompted rather by a spirit of revenge than of love, she had become intractable and sought to make him the most miserable of beings.

His face had become as red as flame, and his look grew so terrible and fierce it seemed that a raging fire burned in his visage and in his heart. Whilst talking he put his fingers into his mouth and gnawed his nails. Carried away by uncontrollable anger, he drew near to Bertrande, and, seizing her weak and delicate hands in a powerful grip, said: "Although love, reason and humble prayer are without avail, I will not give up my rights, for without them I should not be long in this world."

The brother of Martin's father, Uncle Pierre Guerre, who had always borne him much affection, and who saw in the newcomer no sign of guile, was so moved by compassion that he exhorted Bertrande to subdue the resentment that she naturally felt toward the prodigal: "The love I bear you," said he, "and the familiarity with which you have al-

ways received me in your house, constrain me to say that in view of your husband's repentance you should show him more tenderness and less discontent. And, then, you are young; you would be mad to lose the moments of happiness that are before you. And why so much harshness when sweetness is so becoming in woman?"

It is the privilege of old people to believe themselves wiser than those who come after them!

This affectionate counsel troubled Bertrande all the more since she clearly remembered what she had heard in the sermon the previous Sunday, on the authority of the blessed St. John: namely, how can she who loves not her husband, whom she can see, love God, whom she can not see? Further, the previous night she had seen in a dream a man who closely resembled the prodigal, lying beside her in her bed just as on the night he had abandoned her. She had experienced an indescribable joy, for in her dream she was persuaded that it was not a nightmare, but a reality.

So they left them closeted together, and the private interview she had with the prodigal

calmed her apprehensions and dissipated her last doubts. Probably she found his words to her liking, and he gave her such strong and convincing proof that there existed no longer any doubt in her mind or in her heart, for she had no further hesitation in recognizing that it was in very deed her husband who had returned.

He, on his part, wept with joy at having a wife so reasonable and so full of prudence and virtue.

The night of his return in no wise resembled that on which he had flown. It would be impossible to picture their joy, discreetly covered by the veil of the night. Bertrande was enchanted to discover that he was no longer the perplexed and pitiful husband of yore; and so amazed was she by the splendour of the love of her dear husband, at long last hers again, and so contented that she found the moments all too fleeting. But Love had emptied his quiver, for they did not live in the good time of the Homeric gods, so helpful to the mortals who knew how to make them benevolent! In any case, so they were when Minerva paid Ulysses and Penelope, finding

each other again after so long a separation, the delicate attention of withholding Night at the end of her course, and preventing Aurora from harnessing to her chariot her shining steeds, Lampus and Phaeton, with which she arose out of the Ocean to announce to man the light of day.

SECOND PART

The Drama

VII

UNCLE PIERRE

*In Which We See That Nothing Here
Below Is Lasting*

FOR three years they remained in this condition. So well did she treat him that he had every reason to be contented; whilst he, for his part, seemed to love her whole-heartedly, albeit he was a trifle rough. Indeed, he was sometimes rather violent and subject to fits of passion; although she never did anything really blameworthy he would grumble at her, and often she gave way to tears. And when her newly-recovered husband, whom she loved with a mixture of affection, duty, hope and dread, looked at her severely, she recoiled with fear at having done something that displeased him. He had fascinated her entire being and filled her with a thousand tyrannical precepts; telling her, notwithstanding that she built her whole life around his, that she should love and respect

no one but himself—neither father, mother nor relations of any kind; that no one should play any part in their lives; but that from him she should conceal no secret of her personal affairs, neither great nor small.

One day whilst she lay abed longer than she thought decent, and he lay idly stretched out beside her, saying that the crowing of the cock at too matutinal an hour gave him pains beneath the roots of his hair, he grew angry with her and went so far as to give her a spanking. But these were little quarrels between husband and wife!

For his part, he was content to lead an easy-going existence, indolent but not melancholy, taking pleasure in obscene tales, and delighting in foul language, which was scarce to the taste of Bertrande; in any case, finding life good and sweet; a willing servant of Love, but an artisan lacking in subtlety; greedy likewise at the table, with a particular fondness for tartlets, of which his mouth was scarcely ever empty; drinking toasts with all and sundry with the ease of the wine-bibber, knocking in the head of a keg as another breaks an egg and tossing off a huge tankard as though he were emptying a thimble; gorg-

ing himself on the best in the house till he was ready to burst, and, finally, going off to bed like a fighting cock. Thus, although quite thin on his return, he soon took on flesh, becoming big-bellied and as round as a pumpkin.

How absence had changed her Martin, reflected Bertrande.

Of their union were born two children, of whom one died immediately.

The prodigal considered his happy state a permanent one, and had no fear of any change. But envious and inconstant Fortune cannot tolerate an enduring happiness, for nothing here below is lasting.

Soon after Martin Guerre's departure, his father had died, and his uncle, Pierre Guerre, had taken over the direction of the old man's affairs.

The prodigal took this blow a good deal to heart; but death is a thing that no one can remedy. The fortune of the defunct is another matter, and he loudly demanded to be put in possession of his patrimony as well as his own worldly goods. Then he entered into certain legal proceedings which were neither oppor-

tune nor justified. Above all, he demanded that Pierre Guerre turn over the accounts to him, all which was not accomplished without some difficulty. The uncle was even sued by him, which, naturally, the elder man resented profoundly. Things became more and more embittered. The nephew accused his uncle of having tried to poison him with herbs, and even of striking him with a knife with the intention of killing him.

In reality, in the course of a particularly violent and bitter discussion, Pierre Guerre had thrown his nephew to the ground, and perhaps would have brained him with an iron bar and sent him into the other world, had not Bertrande intervened and covered the victim with her own body.* Frustrated, Pierre Guerre decided to bide his time. He did not have long to wait.

* Gayot de Pitaval.

One day toward the end of autumn, 1557, chance brought to Artigues a soldier who was on his way to Rochefort-du-Gard. Being refused hospitality at the Rols farm by Bertrande's husband, he flew into a rage, and, giving way to abuse, told that individual that he was nothing but a scoundrel, who sought

by deception to live sanctimoniously at the expense of another.

The fellow was at length driven away by a volley of stones; but what he had said appeared so interesting to Uncle Pierre that he took him before a notary, had his declaration duly set down, and carefully kept it.

But why should any one go out of his way to disturb the peace of folk who ask only to be happy?

Some little time later, when the distrustful prodigal had picked a quarrel with Jehan d'Escarbeuf, of the town of Carla-Bayle, on the ground that he found it unseemly that Jehan should always take the road on which he thought to encounter Bertrande, Uncle Pierre was not slow to take his revenge. After having brooded over the matter a good deal and sounded his ground well, he seized his opportunity, and persuaded Jehan to bring a criminal charge against Bertrande's husband before the Seneschal of Toulouse, who ordered that worthy's arrest and imprisonment.

During his detention, Pierre Guerre and his four sons-in-law tried their best to convince Bertrande that the man she had taken

for her husband was fuller of lies than of truth. They plied her with mocking and with bitter words, and went so far as to threaten to have her driven away from the Rols farm if she did not disown him for her husband, and if she obstinately persisted in her attachment to a man who, having nothing of his own, yet took from her every thing she had.

But, whether she was filled with shame at the consequences of her mistake, or the lineaments of the man before her eyes were mingled in her mind with those of the husband who had abandoned her, such as she remembered him, or, finally, she was convinced that he was indeed Martin Guerre, she refused to share their views, saying with some bitterness that she recognized him better than any one else, and would kill whoever should say anything to the contrary; that wealth resides in contentment; and, last, that it was he or a devil in his skin.

His enemies had no better success with one of Bertrande's relations, a certain Jean Loze, consul of Pallios, whom they had wished to hook; for that worthy fellow resolutely took the side of the accused man and consigned Uncle Pierre and his sons-in-law to the Devil.

As the quarrel with Jehan d'Escarbeuf was nothing but a peccadillo and the charges of imposture were by no means proved, the prisoner was released by a court order of contradiction.

From Bertrande he received the most affectionate welcome; her joy was apparent in her every act. "She caressed him," says Richer, "gave him clean linen, bathed his feet, and accorded him all the rights of a husband."

In very truth we may wonder how Richer was so well informed; indeed, this is the more surprising inasmuch as very early next morning Pierre Guerre, still accompanied by his sons-in-law, suddenly broke into the conjugal chamber, seized the wretched fellow and carried him off a prisoner to Rieux, in accordance, they said, with a warrant obtained by Bertrande de Rols.

In point of fact, this warrant was only signed on the evening of the same day, although Bertrande's husband had been a prisoner since the morning.

It was therefore obviously a case of abduction, and, what is more inexplicable, when Bertrande went to lodge her complaint of

imposture she sent to her husband, in his cell, a coat, some linen and some money.

From this it would seem that the procurator she gave that very evening had only been obtained by fraud and under threat.

In her complaint she requested that the impostor "be condemned to pay a fine to the king, to ask pardon of God, the king and herself, with bare head and feet and in his shirt, holding a lighted torch in his hands, and confessing that, falsely, recklessly and treacherously he had taken advantage of Martin Guerre by usurping his name and counterfeiting his person, all which he repented and for which he asked pardon, and that he should be condemned to pay to Bertrande the sum of two thousand francs expenses and damages."

The enquiry began.

The accused man pleaded that no misfortune was so great as his, because he had a wife who was so unsympathetic and relatives who were so ill-natured as to contest his condition and name, in order to despoil him of his property, which was worth between seven thousand and eight thousand francs; then,

warming to his work, he declared that his Uncle Pierre, in bringing this accusation against him, was animated solely by covetousness; and that the sons-in-law only espoused the old man's cause from avarice; that they had suborned his wife and led her, at the expense of her honour, into a calumnious accusation, which, from the mouth of a lawful wife, was unheard of and abominable, and which was the complement of the blackest of crimes.*

Then he told all of his story, saying that he had only come back to Artigues because he burned with desire to see his wife, child and relations again; that, notwithstanding the change that time had worked in his countenance, since he had left with only down upon his chin and returned bearded, he had been recognized by everyone, even his Uncle Pierre, who had welcomed him with much warmth, and who had only lost his good feeling for him when he had asked for an account of the administration of his affairs during his absence; that, if he had been willing to give up his property he would not now have been treated as an impostor; that the whole thing was an odious machination against him. He

* Cf. Gayot de Pitaval and Richer, *Famous Trials* I.

requested, in any case, to be confronted with his wife, believing her incapable of concealing the truth entirely; and, so as to shield her from the influence and all the manœuvres of Pierre Guerre and his sons-in-law, that she be sequestered in a place of security.

The judge of Rieux was impressed by the attitude of the accused, especially since he had replied fully and exactly on all points during the examination: he anticipated, indeed, some of the questions, and spoke with all possible preciseness of Biscay, of his birth-place, his father, mother, and all his relations, the year, the month and the day of his wedding, of the priest who had officiated, of those who had been invited to the celebration, their clothing, the wedding feast, of the ball that the young married people had opened and how their mothers had spirited them away during a quadrille, and of their separate beds; he told of their rambles in the fields whilst they were only playmates; he related even the cause of his departure, how he had been equipped as equerry to the Lord of Bourdillon, his wandering life after the death of La Chateigneraye in the duel with Jarnac, the campaigns in which he took part with the

Spanish army, adding that he was even able to produce witnesses to prove his words. In short, Mercury did not recount to Sosia his actions with more minuteness.

Bertrande could only confirm all that the accused had said, and narrated how, after eight or nine years of married life, the witchcraft that had prevented her from being Martin's wife, in the true sense, had at length been removed.

One hundred and fifty witnesses were heard, of whom between thirty and forty gave evidence that he was indeed Martin Guerre, that they had been very familiar with him since his infancy and that they recognized him by certain marks and scars that time had not effaced.

Some witnesses, it is true, declared that the accused was no other than a certain Arnaud du Tilh, called Pansette, of the borough of Libaros, in the neighbouring region of Armagnac, and that they had known him from the cradle. The rest of the witnesses declared that there was so striking a resemblance between the one and the other that they would not venture to say if the accused were Martin Guerre or Arnaud du Tilh.

The judge of Rieux, of a truth, was considerably puzzled, and as he desired to administer justice fairly and impartially, he decided that he could not pronounce his decision until certain contradictions had been cleared up.

He therefore ordered the preparation of two reports on the points of resemblance and of difference between the accused, Sanxi Guerre and Martin's sisters.

From the first report it appeared that Sanxi Guerre in no wise resembled the accused; but the second declared that the accused resembled the sisters of Bertrande's husband. Despairing of obtaining further light on the matter the judge fell back on his own inspiration. In the absence of definite evidence to the contrary, he decided that the accused had been arraigned and convicted of being an impostor, that he was thereby condemned to lose his head, and that after death his body should be quartered.

Naturally, the accused man appealed to the Parliament of Toulouse.

The Court of Toulouse thought, not without some reason, that the matter merited more mature consideration than the first judge had.

given it; but it found nothing better to do than confront the accused anew with Pierre Guerre and then with Bertrande de Rols.

These two confrontations seem to have led our lords of the Parliament to a conviction diametrically opposed to that of the former judge. In their eyes, the counsellor, M. de Coras, tells us, the accused, who impressed them by his assurance and frankness, was the true Martin Guerre, whilst Pierre Guerre and Bertrande de Rols, who appeared somewhat embarrassed, seemed to them to be calumniators.

However, the Court, out of prudence and as a precaution, ordered a new enquiry with new witnesses.

This enquiry, it must be confessed, only brought more obscurity and uncertainty: of the thirty witnesses who were examined, nine or ten declared that the accused was the real Martin Guerre, seven or eight that he was Arnaud du Tilh, and the others that they could affirm nothing with assurance.

All these contradictions, M. de Coras further tells us, threw the judges, as may be imagined, into the greatest perplexity. There were, however, certain disturbing details:

thus, a maternal uncle of Arnaud du Tilh, one Carbon Barreau, formally recognized the accused for his nephew, and sincerely deplored the sorry destiny of a person so nearly related to him. Likewise, other witnesses declared that Martin Guerre was taller and darker; that he was slender and spindle-legged, somewhat bent, "carrying his head between his shoulders," and had an indented chin and a high crown; that he had a hanging upper lip, a big flat nose, the mark of an ulcer on his face and a scar on the right eye-brow.

Evidently, the husband of the beautiful Bertrande was in no wise an Adonis, and she must have needed all her conjugal fidelity to remain so attached to his memory. Although he was a trifle different from the fugitive, as he was remembered, it seems that absence had not noticeably improved his appearance, for the man at the bar was small, thick-set, with protruding belly, stocky legs, and the same marks and scars on his face as Martin was remembered to have had.

But there was something else of considerable import. The shoemaker who made Martin Guerre's shoes testified that he wore a size twelve and the accused only nine. An-

other witness stated that Martin Guerre was expert at arms and wrestling, whereas the accused knew nothing of them. A certain Jean Espagnol, an innkeeper at Touges, averred that the accused had confessed to him his identity and asked him not to reveal that Martin Guerre had given him all his property. Two individuals, Valentin Rougie and Pelegrin, of Libaros, testified that the accused, seeing that they recognized him as Arnaud du Tilh, had made them a sign with a finger to say nothing, and, it would appear, had given Pelegrin two kerchiefs for his discreetness, asking him to give one of them to his brother, Jean du Tilh. Others, again, pointed out that Martin Guerre was of Biscay, where the tongue spoken—the Basque—is quite different from the French and Gascon: whereas, in point of fact, the accused knew nothing of the Basque language except a very few words which, by affectation, he introduced into his speech. These witnesses overlooked the fact that Martin Guerre had left Biscay when he was two years old, and that up to that time he had scarce had occasion to familiarize himself with the language of the country of his origin.

Finally, several witnesses, who might be called character witnesses, said that Arnaud du Tilh from his infancy had had wicked inclinations; that he was accomplished in crime, which he disguised with effrontery; that he was not unacquainted with larceny; that he was expert at all sorts of deceitful tricks and roguish things, a devil in man's clothing; that he used foul language and blasphemy, and abjured God and that he was distrusted by everyone; and, very naturally, it followed that he was quite capable of playing the rôle of impostor, since the impudence he manifested was in his character.

Yet the points in favour of the accused were at least equally strong:

Thirty or forty witnesses who had known him from his early years had recognized him as Martin Guerre, and among these were his own four sisters, who had been brought up with him and whose sagacity was well known. Martin Guerre's two brothers-in-law gave the same testimony.

Other witnesses who had been present at his wedding testified in his favour: Catherine Boère said that she had carried to the newly-married pair the midnight supper, and that

it was indeed the accused who was abed in the room with Bertrande.

Others backed their testimony by declaring that Martin Guerre had two protruding teeth in the upper jaw, a drop of extravasated blood in the left eye, the nail of the index finger smashed, three warts on the back of the right hand and another on the little finger. The accused had all these peculiarities. By what freak could Nature have imitated them in another person?

Finally, it had to be admitted by practically all the witnesses that when the accused arrived at Artigues he had greeted and called by name all those who were intimate with Martin Guerre: that he recalled to those who recognized him only with difficulty places where they had been, pleasure trips they had made together, and conversations they had had ten, fifteen and twenty years before, as if everything had recently taken place.

What was still more remarkable was that he had made himself known to Bertrande by recalling to her the mysteries of the nuptial bed and the most secret circumstances and happenings that only a husband could know. Bertrande admitted even that soon after his

return he had asked her to go and look in a chest for a pair of white breeches lined with white taffeta that Martin had left there, although she had herself forgotten that the garment was still there.

Finally, others—for the accused also had his character witnesses—testified that Pierre Guerre and his sons-in-law deliberately plotted to ruin the unfortunate fellow; that the latter were persecuting him against the will of his wife, and that they had often heard Pierre Guerre say the accused was indeed Martin Guerre, his nephew.

Bertrande's attitude was not less disturbing: when she was confronted with the accused, he called upon her in the name of religion and made her judge of his case, telling the Court that, since he was believed to be withholding the truth, he begged that she be put upon oath in the matter and declared that he was quite disposed that this should be done at the altar and on the damnation of their souls, whilst they both received the body of Our Lord. He declared he would submit himself to any penalty and punishment, even capital, if she swore he was not Martin Guerre. Which would have been a ticklish

and perilous undertaking if he were not sure of himself, and, above all, of her!

Could Bertrande deceive herself so completely, and could she not, more than any other, hit upon some difference? "Was Nature," asks Gayot de Pitaval, "so set upon making two different beings alike that she did not wish even Martin Guerre's wife to perceive the error? Had she wished to place in a body so similar, a soul of the same character?"

Bertrande de Rols naturally wept, and the accused let fall a few tears to keep her company.

Pressed for a reply, after several refusals she said that all this wounded her to the heart, and that she wished neither to swear nor believe him, and pricked her mouth three times with a needle.

Our lords of the Parliament of Toulouse found themselves as perplexed and as full of doubt as the judge of Rieux, and all the science of M. de Coras, counsellor-rapporteur, helped them not one jot to arrive at a decision. However, since it was necessary to find a solution to this "conflict of claims which revealed and obscured the truth. and of

* Gayot de
Pitaval.

which all that was visible was the lightning, followed by thunder,"* the accused was this time to have had the benefit of the doubt, which would likewise have fixed the status of the child he had had of Bertrande de Rols, when an unexpected occurrence, "a miracle of Providence," said M. de Coras, was about to put the whole thing to question anew. This occurrence, which should have thrown a penetrating light on the matter, was destined only to complicate things and render the truth still more difficult of recognition.

VIII

THE MAN WITH THE WOODEN LEG

*In Which We See That a Wooden Leg
Is Not Enough for a Wife to Recognize
Her Husband By*

ONE morning in the year 1559, in the
early days of spring, when

*Le tems a laissié son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye,
Et s'est vestu de broderye
De soliel raiant, cler et beau,**

a wretched-looking fellow with a wooden leg
appeared at Artigues.

On such a spring morning,

*Il n'y a beste ne oiseau
Qu'en son jargon ne chante ou crye:*

* The year has cast his cloak away
Of wind, and cold, and rainy sky,
And has put on his broidery
Of sparkling sunshine, clear and gay.

*Le tems a laissé son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluie.**

But the man, on the contrary, seemed to be sullen and uneasy.

Whilst

*Rivière, fontaine et ruisseau
Portent en livrée jolye
Goultes d'argent d'orfaverie,
Chascun s'abille de nouveau.
Le tems a laissé son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluie,†*

he, for his part, looked indeed very miserable, horribly ugly, ragged and ill-kempt.

According to his story, he came from Spain, by short stages, selling flea powder on the road in order to live. As a matter of fact, it was only saw-dust, which he somehow man-

* There are no beasts, nor birds, but they
Each in his tongue do sing and cry,
The year has cast his cloak away
Of wind, and cold, and rainy sky.

† Rivers and springs and brooks display
All their prettiest livery,
Silver drops and jewellery;
They all are decked in fresh array:
The year has cast his cloak away
Of wind, and cold, and rainy sky.

Rondel by Charles d'Orleans.

(Translation from the *Anthology of French Poetry*, by Henry Carrington, M.A. London and New York. Henry Frowde. MDCCCC.)

aged to sell to ignorant peasants. The idea had come to him when he heard someone tell the legend of Master Pierre Faifeu, student of Angers. And when he was asked how his wonderful powder was to be used, remembering a few lines of the legend:

*Il répondait, sans faire long caquet,
Que mettre faut les puces en paquet,
Puis les prendre chacune seule à seule,
Et leur pousser la poudre dans la gueule:
Toutes mourront sans faire long séjour.**

After which he would go off, without any more lengthy adieu.

On his arrival at Artigues, very early in the morning, all the inhabitants came out of their houses as soon as they saw him, whilst he, like the other man four years before, went straight up to the Rols farm and asked to see Bertrande, his wife.

Of a truth, he was very far from being attractive, for he was bathed in sweat from his long journey, black with dust, and as dirty as can be; in short looking more the man of war than the elegant courtier, and withal so thin, shrivelled-up and emaciated that he was almost a skeleton.

* He replied, without idle words, that they should put the fleas in a packet; then take them one by one and stuff the powder into their mouths, and all would die without tarrying.

He called himself Martin, who had gone off to the wars twelve years before, and said he had lost his leg whilst the battle of Saint-Laurent raged beneath Saint-Quentin.

Bertrande's father hastened to find his daughter, and, rushing up to her room, where, somewhat indisposed that morning, she was resting, cried out:

"Get up, Bertrande, get up! Here's another Martin Guerre, it seems!"

Bertrande, paralyzed with fear, and far from well, yet drew near to the window to look at him as he stood waiting in the yard below. As soon as she did so, however, she refused to receive him and repeat with him the private interview she had had with the first. In all truth, what conviction could so unattractive, so miserable and so hirsute a man hope to give her—and, what is more, a man with a wooden leg! She was too wise to make such a bad exchange.

And, indeed, no one recognized him. Who was this miserable wretch who sought to impose on people? The villagers, quickly assembling, regarded him with considerable curiosity. Some laughed up their sleeves, and others jeered at him openly with much lusti-

ness. The animosity of the group soon began to find a voice, and tongues were set loose. They began to hoot at the newcomer, threatening him with blows, and came within an ace of doing him some mischief; in all which the family dog took no part, for he was dead.

Boiling over with wrath at his reception, the fellow limped off, and swore by St. Peter and St. Paul that he would have his wife, whether it were by love, ruse or force.

Bertrande, for her part, sharply rebuked those who bothered her about the cripple. Uncle Pierre, however, saw the matter in quite another light. This unforeseen advent furthered his plans marvellously, and favoured his scheme for revenge. Accordingly, he lost no time in succouring the new-comer and taking him under his protection, and all this so manifestly that those who were favourable to the former claimant declared that the wooden-legged man had been conceived and contrived in every detail by Pierre Guerre.

As soon as he learned of the suit that was under consideration at Toulouse, the new arrival did not let the grass grow under his feet. Armed with advice and money from

Uncle Pierre, for he was short of funds, he got into a cart, on account of his leg, and went off without more ado to seek justice in the capital of the Languedoc.

At the outset he had, indeed, hesitated, for he had a terrible fear of the "angels of the Court," and was aware, as the good King Louis XII had said, that men of the law, too prone to a regrettable procrastination, consume the substance of the people by the slowness and the costs of the suits, and that these "swallowers of hoar frost" fleece the poorer litigants.*

* Rabelais so styles lawyers because, going to Court early in the morning, they are liable to swallow the cold mists.

As soon as he arrived, however, he immediately went to see the lawyer who had been recommended to him.

The affair seemed rather ticklish to the man of law. He meditated a good deal, not knowing from which side to approach the matter for the best.

At length, he counselled his client to make a request to the Court to be heard. Moreover, considering the influence that presents usually have on people, and particularly those entrusted with the administration of Justice—all this, it is very evident, applies only to a past epoch!—he advised his client to offer

something fitting and proper, not to his judges, who were too high placed, but to the clerk of the Court, who could bring the request to the notice of the rapporteur and obtain his assent. As for the latter, it would be better to send Bertrande to him, if she were pretty, dainty and of graceful figure. With these gentlemen of the law her beauty would do more for his cause than money.

This suggestion shocked the litigant considerably. However, he let reason rule him and decided to follow the advice; but he jibbed at anything more than a piece of black cloth for the clerk.

In very truth, it seems doubtful if the present had very much effect. Perhaps it was not of sufficient value! In any case, the Court ordered that the suitor should first be arrested, that he should undergo examination, and that only afterwards should he be confronted with the accused man, with Bertrande, with those who, according to him, were his sisters, and with the principal witnesses of the previous enquiries.

When he was asked the questions that had been put to the other, the claimant without

hesitation gave the marks and signs by which he could be recognized. These indications, however, were not so numerous as those named by the other. He admitted, indeed, that his recollection of things was general, and that certain details had disappeared from his memory.

Then they brought the rivals face to face: two eggs, remarked M. de Coras, could not resemble each other more exactly. To see one was to have seen them both: they were perfect doubles. "Nature," says Lope de Vega, "growing weary sometimes of diversifying her portraits, makes copies in which she imitates with perfection those she already has limned."

The first Martin Guerre, in a furious and hoarse voice, called the other a babbler, a frequenter of harlots, and a maniac of surpassing idiocy, who uttered only nonsensical things, and other names it would not be seemly to repeat, declaring that he would put the halter about his own neck and suffer himself to be torn limb from limb alive by four horses if he did not expose the lies of this rascal and scoundrel, in whose body lay the heart of a cowardly and wicked man.

In the meantime, when he had finished his lamentation and complaints, he plied his rival with insidious questions on certain events which had taken place in the Rols farmhouse and with which he should have been familiar were he the true Martin Guerre. But, he added with heat, this new-comer from the Devil was a puppet of his uncle's, and nothing but an instrument of his revengefulness.

It must be admitted that the wooden-legged man was very far from being able to reply with the readiness and assurance that characterized the other, when the same questions had been put to him. He added that he seemed to remember having already met the accused somewhere.

In order to throw further light on the matter, the Court withdrew the first Martin Guerre, and questioned the second on a number of secret events and details that he should have known and regarding which neither had then been interrogated. He gave the correct replies.

But the first man, being in turn questioned, answered with the same accuracy.

As a last resource and final proof, the Court made the four sisters and their husbands, Uncle Pierre, the brothers of du Tillh and the principal witnesses defile before the two Martins.

The eldest sister, after having considered the two men, threw herself into the arms of the second, and, weeping, embraced him and said:

"This is my brother Martin Guerre. I admit the error into which the other had led me and kept up so long."

On being recognized the wooden-legged man mingled his tears with those of his sister, for no love is like unto brotherly love, which will go to any length, and show in everything a noble generosity of heart.

The other sisters likewise recognized him, as did also nearly all the witnesses, who, however, had been among the most certain in their recognition of the other.

But Uncle Pierre, it must be said, possessed the decisive proof.

When he was called to the witness stand and asked which of the two he recognized as his nephew, he put on an important air and

delivered to the Court a document which seemed to him to be of inestimable value. It was the statement of the soldier that had been recorded by the notary.

This wandering man of war, who had been driven away by a shower of stones, therein declared that he who was taken for Martin Guerre was an impostor; that the real Martin was in Flanders; that he had a wooden leg in place of the one carried away by a cannon ball during the siege of Saint Laurent, for he had sought a daring and courageous death, whilst this good-for-nothing who passed himself off as the husband of the Lady Bertrande was only one of those rascally camp-followers, who were the riffraff of armies, and had conducted himself in the war like a poltroon and with the courage of a sheep.

Turning swiftly, the first Martin Guerre confronted Uncle Pierre and asked him what proof he had that this so-called soldier was in reality one, and that he was not an instrument of his own contriving.

And, truly enough, this objection could easily seem plausible.

Better still was to have the opinion of the person most concerned—Bertrande.

Every morning, at this season, the floor of the Great Chamber, in which the Court sat, was strewn with fresh grass, replacing the mats which, in the winter, were used to lessen the cold and dampness. At the entrance, Bertrande, dressed in modest fashion, had taken off her high pattens, with which women in those days sought to make themselves appear taller, and, brought before the Court, was requested to swear before Our Saviour Jesus Christ that she would tell the truth and speak without wickedness or malice.

The Abbot and Lord of Brantôme, who lived at that time, had discovered thirty-six ways by which a woman might recognize her husband; but Bertrande, who was by no means stupid, found no single one, unless, indeed, she was sly and wished to reveal nothing.

She declared that the second could indeed be her real husband, for he was the person who most resembled him; but that she found him so greatly changed, so different from the memory of him that she had kept, that she could not venture to recognize him; notably that she did not recognize his voice. Above all the wooden leg troubled her. A little

more, and she would have said, in her candour, that this loss disfigured him.

Then she began to weep and was seized with so great a palpitation of the heart that she lost colour and spirit and fell back without strength, arousing the pity of all the company. Remedies were sought to bring her back to herself.

Little by little her colour returned and she was able to speak again.

Seeing her so subdued and penitent, and believing that she had spoken from the depth of her heart, each began to console her, telling her that God was not so terrible as many sinners feared and that never did He refuse His forgiveness.

In his report M. de Coras is not so generous. He seems, of a truth, not to have much good to say of women. According to him, "they have this characteristic, that they believe thoughtlessly, and are easily deceived by the wiles and cunning of men. And," he adds, "because women seem born with the capacity to weep when it pleases them, no faith should be placed in their tears, which are more often than not make-believe, nor in

their words, which likewise are full of hypocrisy and falseness."

So that was all poor Bertrande got for having so long and virtuously wept over her prodigal husband! And as if she were the more guilty for having been abandoned!

Which counsel, then, should she follow?

In point of fact, after the hearing she returned to Artigues, and, still very much agitated, her first thought was to go and tell her confessor, the curé, in whom she had great confidence, all that had passed at Tholoze, confessing the great perplexity in which she found herself and asking his best counsel.

The curé of Artigues was an humble and worthy servant of God, and highly esteemed. A good-hearted fellow, he was not overwhelmed by weighty thoughts or profound reflections. In his peaceful region, which had never been infested by Huguenotry, the whole of his ecclesiastical life had been concerned with small things that caused him little emotion: he lived between his mass and his confessional, resolving the problems of conscience of his flock, which were rarely complicated and always of the same character.

He took great pleasure in listening to the confessions of his followers, having considerable curiosity regarding the mistakes and peccadilloes of others, not committing any himself, save for the sin of gluttony, in which he took too much pleasure and showed too much weakness, but for which he strove to obtain remission from his God. Moreover, he considered his life upon this earth as a journey toward eternity and wished for nothing in this world beyond a comfortable shelter, good food, clean clothing, peace and tranquillity, experiencing none of those emotional needs which, in general, are common to human creatures.

Thus the matter on which Bertrande sought his counsel found him perturbed and considerably perplexed. His simple nature, which never lost itself in the vagaries of the human soul, understood little of such complications, which he, in his ingenuousness, had never suspected.

What considerations led him to counsel Bertrande to follow the general opinion, and, above all, that recently adopted by the family, is a matter which it would be idle to investigate. Perhaps, indeed, there was no other

reason than that he saw therein the most simple and the least troublesome solution.

In any case, his advice lifted a great load from the unhappy woman. She sent a request to the gentlemen of the Court to be heard again, and, a few days later, "trembling like a leaf shaken by the wind," says M. de Coras, she was again confronted by the prisoners. Melting into tears, she asked pardon of the second for the error into which she had fallen in allowing herself to be deluded and imposed upon by the artifices and deceptions of a miserable wretch. She said that she had been led by her over-credulous sisters-in-law; that her great desire to see her husband again had helped to deceive her; that she had been all the more completely deluded by the indications that the impostor had given her and by his accounts of private things of which only her real husband could have known; that no one could find in her bearing anything which might give rise to suspicion and that the affection she bore her husband had no blemish, except that she loved him too well; that since her eyes had been opened, being very sensitive as to her honour, she had found her false step abomi-

nable and was overcome with shame; indeed, she had hoped that death might cover the enormity of her error, and that if fear of the Lord—whose word should always be obeyed—had not withheld her, she would not have hesitated to take her life; that not being able to bear the horrible thought of having lost her reputation for virtue, she had moreover handed over the impostor to the law, praying Our Lord to preserve her from the obloquy which some sought to attach to her good name.

She said many other pious things in addition, turning toward the Court her beautiful and sorrowful eyes that would have melted a stone. The touching manner in which she spoke, with tears flowing in streams, her beauty, the expression of anguish upon her countenance, the fashion in which she excused herself for appearing too mutable, seemed certain of convincing the judge and the assembly.

However, M. de Coras, remembering that she had manifested the same sincerity and the same tears when she had recognized the first man as her husband, remained incredulous.

Meanwhile, the wooden-legged man seemed in no wise touched by this tardy recognition. Standing there with his arms hanging loosely, holding the forefinger of his right hand in his left, he listened to her without interrupting, fixing her with a cold stare and searching her countenance.

"Stop crying and making all this pretense of fainting," he said to her in a scornful tone, when she had finished. "Saving the presence of the gentlemen of the Court, it would better become you to be more reserved in your sorrow, for your conduct has been neither continent nor loyal, but bigotted, wretched and hypocritical; and, forgetting that you were disconsolate and mournful in order to make believe that the memory of your husband still lived in your breast, you took upon yourself to throw off your deep mourning, become emancipated, and give up your professions, and, further, had got love into your head and thought of nothing but a second marriage and its lascivities. No, no; I cannot and must not let myself be moved by your tears. You have said all sorts of marvellous things, my friend; but fine speeches are no excuse. Since Eve led Adam into sin

all women have set themselves to torment, deceive and ruin men. You are too copious of words and too much a speechifier. The shortest and briefest of speeches are the best and the most becoming. You seek in vain to excuse yourself by instancing my sisters and uncle in order to save yourself from punishment. Put off your presumption: a wife has better means of knowing her husband than his father, mother and the nearest relations, and she would only delude herself into receiving into her bed another, who resembled her husband as much as an ass resembles a Spanish horse, because she was mischievous and took pleasure in her error. I have received too public an affront to pardon those who have been its cause. But all the disgrace is nothing compared with the great wrong that people have sought to do me in setting me at variance with you."

All which seemed much too severe, unless we impute it to love and jealousy, brother and sister of a single birth.

For that matter, the objections of the first accused were even more violent. He reproached his accuser with the abominable

scheme, prosecuted with so much animosity, cunning and deceit, which he had perniciously invented, and besought him by the blood of Christ to take back his words in the presence of those who had heard them, and confess, as reason directed, the real and honest truth, which would retrieve his honour, besmirched by spite and hatred. And as the man with the wooden leg obstinately refused to do anything in the matter, swearing by the holy name of God, he called him a devil reeking with wickedness, a great liar and hypocrite, adding that what to him was more prejudicial than loss of life and property was the attempt to stain the honour of the woman who was the half of himself; which did not, however, prevent him from hurling at her a storm of ugly words and scandalous, in which he likened her to the most lewd and lascivious of women and reproached her with being his mortal enemy by making herself the instrument of such a scheme, and, in short, with having sought nothing but wicked concupiscence, and resorted to all sorts of wantonness in order to entice, in secret, someone with whom to lie abed. He even went so far as

to call her a harlot, shouting out that he detested her for good and always and would pardon her never.

The Court was prodigiously astonished, and, confused by all the wranglings, found it necessary before putting it to the vote to let their counsel ripen, like the green fruit that is placed on straw to be seasoned by time.

IX

MONSIEUR DE CORAS

*In Which We See That Judge Bridoye,
Who So Much Astonished Pantagruel,
Seems to Have Had a Disciple*

IT IS not possible to evoke this passing strange adventure without speaking of M. de Coras, who was the heart and soul of the affair.

M. de Coras had been named as rapporteur in the suit by the Premier of the Parliament of Tholoze, and it was upon the conclusions reached in his report that the decision of the Court was very likely to depend.

M. de Coras was born in 1513 at Réalmont, in Albigeois. The Department of Prints and Engravings of the French National Library possesses a contemporary portrait of him, signed "Bastet." If the portrait, which represents him with a placid expression, a large nose, long ears and thick lips, the upper one adorned by a thin moustache, is not flattering,

the quatrain that accompanies it is distinctly so:

*Ton élégant sçavoir et ta Rare Vertu
Remplirent de leur bruit la France et l'Italie;
Et, Malgré les Rigueurs dont tu Fus combattu,
Tu Soutins en Mourant la Gloire de ta Vie.**

* Thy elegant scholarship and Rare Virtue fill France and Italy with their fame; and, Notwithstanding the harshness with which thou wert assailed, thou maintainest in Death the Glory of thy Life.

In all truth, his youth had been very studious, and on leaving the schools he was so learned that he seems to have been an example for his fellows.

It appears, however, that when these erudite lessons were over, Love never sang to him his song. Thus, since he had never known the swift road and clear light of this fire when it takes hold of one of the ends of the heart, M. de Coras merits the purely honorary title of "virtuous."

He was first a barrister in Toulouse; next he practiced law with much success in France and Italy: but he had to flee from Ferrara to escape the satirical diatribes of the cynical and covetous Aretino. So he returned to Toulouse.

Then he became the chancellor of the Queen of Navarre, Margaret of Angoulême, sister of Francis I, the Margaret of Mar-

garets, author of the *Heptameron*, and Henri II made him counsellor in the Parliament of Toulouse.

During the examination he underwent to be admitted to that office he was so much overcome with nervousness that only his reputation prevented him from being "refused as an idiot," * and he drew upon himself an ill-natured pasquinade, which caused him much vexation.

* Richer. I.

His consolation was the Martin Guerre case.

Now, how did he succeed in finding reasons for his conclusions and the decision of the case? No one can say, and it would be rash to pretend to know. Certainly the hundred and eleven annotations—all of them good, if we may believe their author—with which he was pleased to embellish the Commentary that he made on the decision, tell us nothing on that score. In truth, these annotations are only confused dissertations on all the celebrated impositions and the legends of antiquity—on Abimelech, Abraham, Absalom, Leah and Rachel, on the famous counterparts, the two Amphytrions, the false

Demetrius, on sorcery, spells and witchcraft, on Pope Jean, Esau and Jacob, Sertorius, and the false Baldwin, Count of Flanders, on the combat of Achilles and Hector under the walls of Troy, on the Fathers of the Church and the Councils, and other examples of which the recording would be so much waste of paper; and prolixity is ever to be avoided.

Verily, there was so great a resemblance between the two protagonists of the case and so much difficulty in discovering Bertrande's real husband, that it had needed superhuman sapience and divine guidance to reach certainty in the matter.

However, M. de Coras was in no wise like the judge of whom Henri Estienne tells us, and who had a single formula in criminal trials. If the accused were old: "Hang him," he would say. "Hang him. He has committed many another crime." If he were young: "Hang him, hang him. He would commit many another." Perhaps he was rather of the school of Judge Bridoye, whose practice of throwing dice before passing sentence so much astonished Pantagruel when he arrived at the Centumviral Court of

Myrelingues, which, indeed, was no other than the Parliament of Toulouse.*

* Myrelingues, meaning thousand languages, on account of the great diversity of patois prevailing in this sphere of jurisdiction. (Commentaries of Le Duchat on Rabelais.)

This Judge Bridoye claimed to have an infallible method of settling all suits and disputes, especially the most complicated ones: the size of the dice was all that changed. With great care he would place the bags of each of the parties on one end of the table, and then, letting chance take its course, would throw the dice for each, and he who had the highest point won the case. And when Bridoye was asked what purpose was served by the bills and other proceedings contained in the bags, and why he did not throw the dice the same day and hour, omitting further delay, since such was his method of reaching decisions: "Three exquisite and authentic purposes do they serve," Bridoye would reply. "First, for the form, by the omission of which what has been done can not be valid; secondly, there is no practice in this world like unto, nor more spicy than, emptying bags, thumbing papers, quoting books, filling baskets and attending lawsuits; thirdly," he would continue, "I consider that time bringeth everything to perfection; with time everything becomes clear; time is the

father of truth. That is why I suspend, delay and defer judgment, so that the suit, well aired, sifted and debated, comes in the fullness of time to its maturity, and that the decision subsequently reached may be the more easily borne by the condemned parties."

Verily, there is nothing like this now, with our good justice. Indeed, no!

However all that may be, the report and the eloquence of M. de Coras, more than the certainty of having discovered the truth, brought the Court to a decision.

Thus for many, doubt still existed.

In any case, it was obviously necessary to find a way out of the situation, and the Court was glad to find sufficient reason for leaving Bertrande only one husband, and pronouncing sentence of capital punishment on the first of the two returned warriors.

As for M. de Coras, this affair became his lifelong source of pleasantry: he loved to confabulate obligingly with his friends on the "unprecedented marvel" of the subject. Further, like Bridoye, he was fond of bringing a lawsuit to completion and seeing the documents and bags get bigger and bigger.

As physicians say: there is danger in piercing an abscess before its concoction. Nature tells us: marry girls whilst they are young and partake of the fruit when ripe. Nothing should be done except in full maturity. A bear is born without feet, paws, skin, hair or head; it is only a piece of flesh, crude and shapeless. By dint of licking, the mother gives shape to its members. In similar manner, lawsuits, at their birth, are formless and imperfect. They have only one or two documents, and, so far, are ugly brutes. But when these papers have been piled up, prepared and perfected, it can truly be said that they have members and shape. Then, sergeants, ushers, apparitors, pettifoggers, attorneys, commissaries, barristers, enquirers, scriveners, notaries, registrars, standing judges, sucking vigorously and continually at the purses of the parties, endow their suits with head, feet, claws, snout, teeth, paws, veins, arteries, nerves, muscles, membranes. In other words, bags containing complaints, adjournments, summonses, warrants, informations, preambles, deeds, allegations, interdictions, contradictions, petitions, investigations, replies, rebutters, objections, pleas, rejoinders, verifications, confrontations, libels,

commendatory notes, exceptions, removals, advices, conclusions, appointments, confessions, writs and such spicy morsels and tit-bits of one sort or another—in short, everything that could be found in the suit in order to give only one husband to the Lady Bertrande, piled up around M. de Coras, and made him, in all truth, savour the joy of judging and of living.

But, alas! his joy was of short duration. Only two years after this suit, in 1562, M. de Coras, who was a Calvinist, was accused of plotting to give the city up to the Protestants. He was given no trial, and it was only with great difficulty that he escaped a capital sentence. But ten years later, during the month following the St. Bartholomew massacre, he was again arrested, and on October 4, 1572, along with four counsellors of the Parliament, was hanged in a red robe from the branches of a tall young elm that stood in the Château Narbonnais courtyard, which enclosed the Parliament of Toulouse. M. de Coras was 59.

His last words were the hopeless lament of Sophocles, so readily comprehensible in that extremity: "Why be born? 'Twere better not to be!"

X

THE HUSBAND IS PITILESS

*In Which We See That Ulysses Would
Have Done Better to Stay on the Island
of Calypso*

M. DE CORAS tells us that what gave the Court most difficulty and occupied much of its attention, was the problem of deciding if Bertrande de Rols and Martin Guerre "were liable to judgment."

As regards Bertrande, the wooden-legged man remained without pity. Her tears, the memory of their youth—if he were indeed her husband—and the entreaty of his sisters were powerless to move him. Vainly did the Court point out that he had been lacking in vigilance as far as his wife was concerned and had kept very careless watch; for a closely-kept wife is difficult to lose, and opportunity makes the thief.

No, replied he, turning away from her who, notwithstanding, was still his wife; this

woman wilfully deceived herself because she took pleasure in being deceived. In no wise is it possible to believe that a resemblance can be so great as to impose on a wife, to whom a husband presents himself, on occasion, unclothed. After a long period of the greatest familiarity, not only do his features, bearing, gait, voice inflexions and customary gestures stamp themselves on the mind, but likewise also an indescribable something in his countenance, fashioning and physique; whence she would discern things imperceptible to any other. Never would any one believe that an impostor could have all these personal and particular characteristics, least of all a wife, from whom a husband can conceal nothing. In comparing her recollection of her lost husband with the impostor she must immediately be struck by the difference. But to be forgotten is the eternal lot of the absent, who are always in the wrong, and many women give preference to him who is present.

He, poor wretch, did not know that the gods themselves sometimes take pleasure in bewildering poor humans by such mistakes. The ancients well knew this when they con-

ceived the story of Alcmene, wife of the Theban, Prince Amphytryon, whose person amorous Jupiter counterfeited so successfully that the poor woman, even like Bertrande, was deceived. True enough, her mistake lasted only one night; but Jupiter, by his divine power, prolonged it enormously, and as a token the king of the gods gave her Hercules. And Amphytryon had the good sense to forgive.

The Court doubtless drew inspiration from this mythological precedent to pardon, likewise, the deluded wife. It recalled the high reputation her virtue enjoyed; it took into consideration that the poor woman had been confirmed in her mistake by the example of her husband's sisters and many other persons who were victims of the same error, by the striking resemblance of the impostor to the man he counterfeited, by the indications he gave, to the point of recounting the most secret of things and the exact date of happenings, and, finally, by her fear of dishonouring herself if she had prosecuted the impostor and failed to sustain her accusation, not, indeed, being certain of her error. Above all, the judges took into account the weakness of

her sex, easily misled by the craft and shrewdness of men, in whom the law presumes no fraud nor intent to do wrong, and put her out of the case.

The Court had likewise to consider the status of the husband.

This husband, in abandoning his wife as he had done, was in reality the cause of all that had happened. Further, by his own confession, he had borne arms against his Prince at the battle of Saint-Laurent, where his leg had been carried away by a cannon ball. Did not all this merit punishment of some sort?

But the Court, as if it had exhausted all its severity in condemning, on simple presumption, one of the two claimants, found excuses for the conduct of the other. It considered that if he had given his wife liberty to play the wanton and opportunity for adultery, the cause was so very distant that he could not now be called to account before an earthly tribunal; that, further, it had not been established that he had had the express intention of bearing arms against his Prince; that, in fact, having gone to Spain, he had been a lackey to the Cardinal of Burgos, then at-

tached to that dignitary's brother, who had taken him off, perhaps against his will, to Flanders; that he had been obliged to follow his master at the battle of Saint-Laurent, where he had fought in spite of himself, not being able to escape from the eye of his master. Moreover, to serve against one's country was then a popular idea, even amongst the nobility.* Then, this country fellow had already paid, by the loss of his leg, for the crime imputed to him.

* Cf. Brantôme and his intention of going over to the King of Spain and betraying his country, like many another.

For him, likewise, the Court, in a mood of clemency, found an excuse: it took into account the levity and ardour of youth which in those years was boiling over within him. Thus the law was not invoked against him, and he was pronounced Bertrande's real and only husband.

These considerations having been approved by a majority, M. de Coras tells us, the Court, on September 12, 1560, after having heard, with great devoutness, the invocation, which seemed extremely appropriate, pronounced judgment as follows:

"Further to the trial, conducted by the judge of Rieux, of Arnaud du Tilh, called

Pansette, self-styled Martin Guerre, prisoner at the Conciergerie, appealing decision of the said Judge, etc. . . . It is hereby declared that the Court has annulled and annuls the appeal of the said du Tilh. And for punishment and atonement for the imposture, duplicity, assumption of the name and counterfeiting the person of another, adultery, rape, sacrilege, plagiarism, larceny and other crimes committed by the said du Tilh, resulting from the said lawsuit, the Court has condemned and condemns him to make amends in front of the church of Artigues, and, kneeling, clothed in his shirt, bare-headed and barefoot, with the halter about his neck and holding in his hands a lighted candle, ask forgiveness of God, the King and Justice, of the said Martin Guerre and Bertrande de Rols, married, and, this done, the said du Tilh shall be delivered into the hands of the executioner, who shall lead him through the main streets and thoroughfares of the said Artigues, and, with the halter about his neck, shall be led before the house of the said Martin Guerre, and from a gibbet, which for the purpose shall there be erected, be hanged and strangled, and afterwards his body shall be

burnt; And for certain reasons and considerations, the Court has awarded and awards the property of the said du Tilh to the daughter, begotten of his deed and act, of the said de Rols, under pretext of marriage, falsely pretended by him, counterfeiting the name and person of the said Martin Guerre, and by this means deceiving the said de Rols, less the cost of justice; And, further has put and puts out of the case and instance the said Martin Guerre and Bertrande de Rols, also the said Pierre Guerre, uncle of the said Martin Guerre; and has delivered and delivers the said Arnaud du Tilh to the said Judge of Rieux, for execution of the present sentence according to the herein-mentioned procedure and terms. Judicially pronounced the twelfth day of September 1560."

XI

AND SO ENDS THE ADVENTURE

*In Which We See That the Best Way to
Keep a Secret Is to Tell It to No One*

NOTWITHSTANDING all this, considerable doubt still existed, and the decision of the Parliament of Tholoze was far from satisfying everyone. This Parliament, according to Brantôme, was looked upon as "very just and equitable and not at all corrupt"; * but Montaigne was no doubt right when he declared that "much error in this world, or, to speak more boldly, all error springs from the fact that we are taught to be afraid of admitting our ignorance and are forced to believe all that we cannot deny: we speak of everything by rule and decision. In Rome, even when a witness testified regarding something he had seen with his own eyes, and a judge decreed from the fullness of his learning, it was customary to use the form 'It seems to me that . . .' I am led,"

* Illustrious
Ladies: First
Discourse.

he added, "to detest probable things when they are presented as infallible. I like words that soften and modify the temerity of our propositions: 'probably,' 'peradventure,' 'somewhat,' 'it is said,' 'I think,' and the like."

And, giving his opinion on the decision of Toulouse, on "that strange case of two men who claimed to be the same individual"—Montaigne had just left the *Cour des Aides* of *Perigueux*, where he was counsellor, in order to enter the Parliament of Guyenne in 1557—he said in no uncertain terms: "I remember—so it seems to me—that the account given by de Coras made the imposture of the man he considered guilty appear so marvellous and so much exceeding our knowledge and his own that I found much audacity in the judgment condemning him to be hanged. Let us receive a decision which says 'The Court understands nothing hereof' more freely and candidly than the *Areopagists*, who, wishing to get rid of a suit they could not unravel, ordered the parties to come back in a hundred years."

'Twas wise, indeed, but slow of bearing fruit.

On the other hand, Etienne Pasquier,* who at that time was no more than a great barrister, wrote: "I would like to raise the question if this Martin Guerre, who was so incensed with his wife, did not merit as severe a punishment as Arnaud du Tilh's for having been, by his absence, the cause of this misdeed. . . . A man should not be allowed to leave his wife without cause for so long a period, and then, at the end of it, be excused of it by virtue of a fit of anger enacted before his judges. It seems to me that it was a veritable mockery and travesty of justice. . . . If Martin Guerre had been condemned to death because, being the real husband, he had abandoned his wife without reason, and so by his absence provided the theme and subject of all this imposture, I believe that our descendants would have endorsed the decree as being very just; at least, I am sure that married women would not have been grieved."

* In his *Re-searches*, vol. I, book vi., chap. xxxvi.

An access of sincerity, however, was about to remove all scruples and calm all doubts.

In order that the decision might be executed, he who had been condemned by the

Parliament of Toulouse for Arnaud du Tilh was taken back to Artigues.

Up to that moment he had steadfastly maintained that the law had made a mistake and that a terrible iniquity had been perpetrated. He affirmed this with the vehemence he had shown before his judges. Did he hope for a degree of clemency, in the belief that by continued lying and oath-taking he might throw doubt upon the justness of the decree? Such, indeed, was possible; and in any case it was very probable. But when he found himself shut up securely in chains and carefully watched, and understood that the sentence was irremissible and his execution inevitable, he fell into a great uneasiness, and was overcome with anguish and affliction. Then he asked to be heard by the Judge of Rieux, and on September 16, 1560, four days after the sentence was pronounced, he made his confession.

In the prison, before the Judge of Rieux and his clerk, he confessed that he had wickedly lied, that he was indeed Arnaud du Tilh, called Pansette, of the borough of Sagias; that he was nothing but a wastrel, and very poor. Poverty, he declared, is a

great evil, and whosoever can, by a change in his situation, avoid it, does so. Thus had he determined to commit the crime of imposture, for, in the camp in Picardy, where he had met Martin Guerre, he had frequently been mistaken for him. Making Martin tipsy one day, he had easily unloosed his tongue and drawn from him the most intimate secrets.

Leaving Martin in Flanders, and returning to the neighbourhood of Artigues, he began enquiries regarding the condition of the man he resembled, his father, his wife, his sisters, his uncle and other relations, and what he had done before leaving home. Then, all he had to do was to disguise his visage somewhat and act his part, in which he had persisted to the end, being ever upon his guard and circumspect withal, and giving himself up freely to perjury when such seemed necessary, as indeed every dissembler must needs do.

Notwithstanding, he denied that he had used spells, enchantments or any kind of magic.

Since he had declared so much, he completely unburdened his conscience and like-

wise confessed other crimes, regretting—such was his penury—that he could not make God some little present so as to atone in part for his sins; as if God gave His mercy for gold!

This confession came as a great relief to the perplexed Judges; but, by the same token, it made the execution of his sentence inevitable. Perhaps he was right who shamelessly declared: "Come what may, never confess!"

In any case, his conscience set at rest, the miserable wretch, at the end of his tether, gave no thought but to the laborious task of winning his salvation. He was taken to the church of Artigues to pray and make his atonement. There, after several hymns and canticles in honour of the Virgin Mary, he received the Holy Sacrament from the altar so devoutly and with such great humility that tears fell from the eyes of all those present, moved thereto partly by piety, partly by pity at seeing so saintly an end. After this he declared himself resigned to the punishment to which he had been condemned.

Having been led around the town, with his thumbs in the cords, and finding himself at the foot of the gibbet, which, in accord-

ance with the sentence, had been set up in front of Martin Guerre's house, he began, notwithstanding that a great storm of wind and rain came on, to make amends, kneeling with a torch in his hands, confessing his damnation, and imploring with great sincerity forgiveness and salvation. Then he asked pardon of Martin Guerre and his wife. Manifesting considerable anguish and profound penitence, he begged the onlookers to intercede for him, now on the threshold of death, so that he might obtain God's pardon and mercy and forgiveness, which, vast and incomprehensible, is never refused to those who, in faith, implore it; and, fervently hoping to escape eternal damnation, he underwent the punishment of man.

Instead of taking pleasure in seeing the poor criminal brought to justice or crying out maliciously, as was usual: "In pieces! In pieces!" or "Death! Death!"—Queen Isabella of Castile thought, indeed, that there were four things in the world very pleasant to see: a man of war in a camp, a bishop in his pontificals, a beautiful woman in bed, and a thief at the gibbet—all those who were present had extreme compassion for the

wretchedness of the condemned man. Weeping at seeing so much devoutness, so that tears flowed upon his body, they praised God who, by his mercy, had despatched from so wicked a body a purified soul, and who makes truth always triumphant over falsehood. With one voice they began to cry: "Jesus! Jesus!" making so much noise that one could no longer hear God's thunder. Then they resumed their prayers, from which the soul of the condemned could receive nothing but good.

The confession of the impostor had calmed Martin's wicked ire against his wife, truly deceived and duped by appearances. He saw that her mind had been fascinated by the wiles and duplicity of crafty people, and by all that they had made her believe, and that she had let herself be ensnared, like a bird. Thus, when he knew the whole truth and realized that she had told him no falsehood, he repented of his severity and did all he could to make amends and defend her; for he was in no wise ill-natured, but was rather of those who, when worked upon by revengefulness, are in the beginning glowing and

hot, but, by lapse of time and temporizing, cool off and come to nothing. Consequently, instead of living in sourness, languor and melancholy, after having each done penitence for a while—she in a nunnery, he in a monastery—and softened their hearts by abundance of tears, they gave each other pardon, for the love of God and little Sanxi, leaving behind all their bitter memories and ills, and devoting themselves to only that which brought happiness.

So for them Love returned—that merciless archer, whose golden arrows had caused them so much pain, ready to inflict new, but less deadly, wounds.

Martin found new tenderness for Bertrande. The dainties of love are not forgotten, and the sweet sport, once tried, is never unlearned. Moreover, like the beautiful Paule of whom mention has been made elsewhere, and who, only about ten years older than Bertrande, at eighty, if we may believe Brantôme who saw her at that age, looked very much as in her youth,* Bertrande remained as beautiful as in her springtime, like those winter and last season's fruits which can com-

* The beautiful Paule was born in 1518, eleven years before Bertrande, and died in 1610.

pare with those of summer and are as lovely and delicious, nay, even more. Further, as a great lady of Spain of that day said, years never age a woman from the waist down, for these are parts that are in no wise exposed, like those above, to the cold, rain, wind, sun, moon, nor, what is worse, to paints which so much impair the visage. Therefore, the continuance of the pleasures of love for her is always agreeable and sweet, and time does not change her. And when some hinted it was not so with Martin, who became quite humpbacked: "What does it matter," she would reply, "if the bell has some flaw, provided its clapper is good!" *

* Another old saw ran: "In an old barn you can thresh well; but you can do nothing with an old flail."

Thus, happy and contented, they lived long, and little by little drew nearer to old age and the resting place of mortals.

A few days before his death, believing, because nature grew weak within him, that his sojourn in this mortal world would not last much longer, Martin, who, on account of his misadventure, was still known for twenty leagues around as "Martin s'en va-t'en Guerre," called Bertrande to him and thanked her, and then calmly went to meet death half-

way. Soon, indeed, his soul left its wretched body, which was only its prison and not its domicile.

But who, here below, has only friends? Those of Arnaud du Tilh had harboured rancour against the wooden-legged man for having brought the other to his death. Thus, when they saw him carried to the cemetery they had no other orison than the refrain of his song:

*Martin s'en va-t'en terre
Pan, pan rataplan
Et ne reviendra plus guère.
Patati, patatan.**

Not long afterwards Bertrande, having lived the normal span of years, went to rejoin him, for:

*Je congnoys que pauvres et riches,
Sages et fols, prebstres et lais,
Noble et vilain, larges et chiches,
Petitz et grans, et beaulx et laids,
Dames à rebrassez collets,
De quelconque condition,*

* Martin's gone beneath the ground
Pan, pan rataplan
And ne'er again you'll see him around.
Patati, patatan.

*Portant attours et bourreletz:
Mort saisit sans exeption.**

Indeed, 'tis always thus that the adventure ends.

Evidently, all the guilty are not punished on this earth; but the soul, at the hour of its separation from the body, must receive its sentence according to its acts and merits. Herein we are concerned only with human justice. Do not let us be too exacting, and let us consider ourselves satisfied if we can draw a moral from this true story of old days:

O women, who have loved—or believed you loved, which amounts to the same thing—and who, notwithstanding everything, would remain faithful, make very sure, in view of the possibility of seeing the fickle one take wing, to note some special sign by which to recognize him surely when he re-

* I know full well that rich and poor,
Villein and noble, high and low,
Laymen and clerks, gracious and dour,
Wise men and foolish, sweet of show
Or foul of favour, dames that go
Ruffed and rebatoed, great or small,
High-tired or hooded, Death (I know)
Without exception seizes all.

François Villon (Payne's translation).

turns, without deceiving yourselves like Alcmene or like Bertrande: one is not always the plaything of a god or an impostor stricken by remorse.

But what sign? you will say.

Each one must find her own. You are clever enough for that.

In any case, beware of making confidences: the best secret is the one you are wise enough to keep to yourself, and no one can keep it better.

FINIS

Delayed

